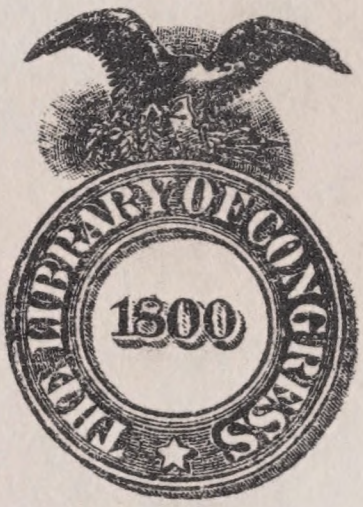

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BY

ELIZABETH Z. ZANE.

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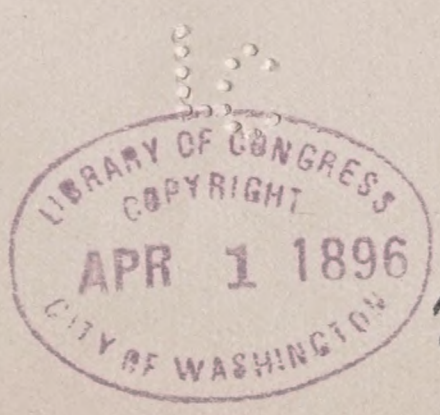

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IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF

MY DEAR SISTER

LAVINIA J. PALMER,

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

Life is to some like a garden fair,
Freighted with perfume of flowers rare;
Life is to others—blank despair;
Misery, heartache, woe and care.

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While the World Slept.

CHAPTER I.

THE HONEYMOON.

HOW hot the day had been. Even up among the mountains, where we were supposed to keep cool, we had suffered. But now that the sun was slowly disappearing in majestic silence, making the sky a thing to feast the eye upon, we felt better. We had assembled upon the wide old-fashioned porch to rock and enjoy the beauties of nature.

Our number was composed entirely of women, and, contrary to the reputation we bear, silence, absolute silence, reigned. I devoted my time between the sunset and my right-hand neighbor.

She was a dream of loveliness, as she sat lost in thought with a half rapt, half sad expression upon her beautiful face.

Her eyes were gazing toward the sunset, yet I fancied she did not see it. As I watched her I could but think she did not belong to this work-a-day world.

My thoughts led me so far away from my surroundings that I found myself saying aloud, "What a problem life is!" My neighbor started as if just waking from a sleep, turned to me, and in a low sweet voice said:

"Thank you. I was waiting for some one to break the spell." Then she saw the look of astonishment on my face, and moving her chair closer to mine, said:

"I know you will think me foolish, but," continuing in a low earnest voice, "I have the strangest feelings at times. I seem to be lost. Live in another world and converse with other people, and I cannot get away from it all until I hear a human voice. That always breaks the spell. I came out here to wait for my husband. Everything was so silent I lost myself. Your voice awoke me. Brought me back, and again I thank you. Ugh," and she shivered and drew nearer. "I am

half afraid during the twilight hour ; I see and hear such strange things."

She wrapped her fleecy white shawl more closely about her and remained silent. She interested me ; both she and her husband.

They were spending their honeymoon up among the mountains. She told me they came to Troutville because it was quiet and select. I found myself in the same place, not wholly because it had many advantages, but principally because the proprietor was a sort of second cousin of mine, and took me at reduced rates. I had been studying very hard.

My aim and ambition was to become a physician. I was an orphan, with but slender means, few friends, and a great desire to make myself useful in the world.

I found myself growing interested in this young couple, they were so happy, so free from all care, yet I did not envy them, but quite often found pity creeping in my heart for them.

He was a perfect type of manhood, and very handsome. His hair was a golden brown and curled about his white forehead,

the envy of all the girls in the hotel. His face was full of romance, and candor shone from his clear brown eyes. A long silky mustache adorned his handsome face. He looked what he was, a man who respected himself, and whom the world in turn respected.

And she—well I cannot describe her. Almost as tall as her husband, she towered above the most of her sex. Her hair, like his, was a golden hue but a shade lighter, and she wore it in a graceful knot on top of her head.

Her face reminded me of a living flower. I often pictured her a flower animated with life and moving among us.

It grew upon me more and more as I watched her, that she did not wholly belong to us. I could not find the heart to arouse her from her reverie. I was content to watch her in silence, which she abruptly broke by saying :

"Miss Dormer, do you believe in reincarnation?"

"I never thought much about it," I smil-

ingly answered, "but I fancy it might be an interesting study."

"I wonder," she slowly inquired, "if there is such a thing."

She appeared very much in earnest, and I could detect a ring of anxiety in her voice.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Russel," I ventured to say, "but I thought you were the strictest kind of a Presbyterian.

"Yes, I was brought up from childhood in that faith and still cling to it, but somehow, in spite of my religious training, in spite of my fighting against it, I think of and almost believe in reincarnation. I tell you this because I feel I must confide in some one. My husband laughs at me, and says I have a vivid imagination, and that there is no such thing." Then she leaned her beautiful face close to mine, and in a low voice said, "We have been here six weeks. I have seen much of you and I like you. I feel you can understand me. Won't you please come to my room to-night? I have something to give you—something for you to read."

I promised her I would, but further conversation was interrupted by Mr. Russel coming lightly toward us with love-light in his eyes, as he greeted his beautiful wife.

After we had dined I went to my room and sat down to think. Leon and Leona, what strange names, yet how well they suit the owners.

It came very forcibly to my mind that there was something unusual about these new friends of mine. Their names were as near alike as two names could be, and their hair was almost the same color. They seemed to be created one for the other. Yet, according to nature and science, they should have been different, opposites, in order to lead a peaceful happy life. I never saw two happier people, seldom two so happy. I gave up reasoning, left my room, and the clock was striking nine as I knocked at her door.

Above the soft sound of a piano Mrs. Russel's voice bade me enter. She rose and greeted me with a grace that was all her own. When she saw me comfortably seated in a

low rocker, she threw herself upon a couch and, half reclining upon the downy pillows, looked at me with one of her divine smiles and said:

"Miss Dormer, don't you think I am a very strange woman?"

"I think you a very beautiful one," I answered.

"Thank you," she said, her face flushing with pleasure. "I am very glad I am beautiful. For by the aid of it I can retain the love of my king. Please don't think me very foolish, when I tell you that I love and worship him. From the time I was a little child I saw and knew him in my dreams. My baby mind knew and grasped, in its baby way, that he was somewhere waiting for me."

I was both interested and amused at this singular woman. "What odd, strange fancies you have," I smilingly said.

"Yes, they must appear so to you. But come out on the balcony. I love to hear the trout stream rippling by, it tells me many things."

I rose and followed her. We stood in

silence, my companion gazing at the clear stream with her large brown eyes, as if she might read her destiny therein.

"Miss Dormer, what does the water say to you as it babbles by?" she turned and inquired.

"It says to me, to-night, 'peace and rest, peace and rest,'" I answered, my mind catching the inspiration of the hour, and her presence.

"Strange," she cried, "but it tells me, 'I cannot rest, I cannot rest.'"

"That is the difference in our temperament and imagination. My mind is at rest, while perhaps yours is longing for the unattainable. I accept sorrow and joy both, in my own quiet way, while you, like the bright, beautiful creature you are, half belong to a higher world. I can fancy your soul longing to be free. Not because you are at all unhappy, but you are above us. Some things about you we cannot understand and few of us try. We are more apt to laugh at you, and try to bring you to our worldly level. You are a woman

who takes a higher view of life. The struggles and cares of this world do not trouble you, unless they produce a discord in your heavenly-tuned nature. Then you wake to the fact that things are very worldly and human after all."

"How well you read me," she answered. "My husband, Leon, told me that was why he loved me. I had the face and mind of an angel, with a good share of a poor worldly woman's weaknesses. The first time we met our souls recognized that we were intended for each other."

She rose, left the balcony, quickly returning with a roll of paper in her hand, remarking:

"I am going to give you something to read. It is truth, every word; I mean as far as I am concerned. I wrote it just as I saw and heard it. You can look at it from a practical point of view, while I only see the impossible side of it.

"I know nothing of reincarnation nor any of the spiritualistic things that are being tested now-a-days. I have never read any-

thing treating of them. I was half afraid to do so, fearing that they might in some way affect my happiness.

"I would like you to read what I have written, and if you think it would interest the world, give it to it, for I feel that until I have given it to mankind I cannot find absolute rest. Correct it and change it to your heart's content. There is no sound logic in it, no reason about it; it is simply what I was, what I am and what I saw."

I extended my hand for the manuscript, and as she placed it therein we heard her husband approaching. Turning to him with a sigh of relief, she said:

"Leon, dear, I have given it to Miss Dormer, and I believe now I can rest."

"I am glad, my love," he answered, "that you have, for you have allowed those horrible dreams to work on your sensitive nature until I feared they might affect your health. I haven't a doubt, that if you imagined your peace was disturbed by not giving it to the world, that now you will be blest."

I bade them good-night, and left them standing out in the moonlight, looking the fairest sight I ever gazed upon.

Going to my room, I locked the door, changed my dress for a soft gown and settled myself to read.

Everything was still. The only noise I heard was the trout stream rippling by, and occasionally through the open window I could hear the birds fluttering in their sleep. I was startled to see the sun shining brightly. The breakfast bell had pealed out its command ere I had finished the manuscript.

This was what I read :

MY DREAMS.

I was born in a little village one bright day in June. My father was a Presbyterian minister. My dear mother I never knew, she having died when I was six months old.

My childhood life was a comparatively happy one, but my dear father called me

strange and wayward, and often talked with me of my peculiar thoughts and actions.

I was not like other children. I lived in a world of my own, being both queen and subject in one. I was a great trial to father on account of my strange dreams and, as he thought, bad digestion. The nights would ring with my hideous cries.

In vain my father tried everything he knew or any one advised. He would send me to bed after having eaten a light supper, remarking, "I think that will cure your dreams." But alas, it did not.

He then tried allowing me to eat all and everything I desired, but in both cases the results were the same. The night would be made hideous with my piercing screams.

My dreams were all relating to the same things. Snakes and flowers would be mixed in horrible confusion. Then I would feel that I was going to sleep, never again to wake. And a man appeared in all this as a friend, yet my most bitter foe.

As a girl I was bold and daring, yet at sight of a snake I would cower in abject

terror. I grew to womanhood, yet the dreams remained. I lived as if waiting for some one to free me from their terrors.

I met Leon Russel, my husband, when I was twenty-two; I knew when I saw him I had found what I had been waiting for.

He was young, handsome and wealthy. I was young, beautiful and had all the world before me. When one day he led me to father and told him of our love, father was not surprised.

"I saw it would end so," he said; "take her, and my blessing also."

Leon was obliged to go away, and I saw him only one night of each week until we were married, which was on both his and my birthday, he being just one year older than myself.

The nights he would leave me I would dream strange things that made me shudder yet fascinated me.

DREAM FIRST.

From an Unknown Land.

I went to bed thinking of Leon. I was very happy, and at first did not go to sleep. But at last I closed my eyes and was soon lost in slumber. I dreamed that a man of handsome face and form and with dark fascinating eyes came to me, sat down by the side of my bed, and said:

"The time has come for me to throw the burden of my sin away. I am your guardian. I once was your husband—you were my wife. I see a look of surprise on your face. This is not the first time you have loved and, I might say, betrayed. This is the second time for you in this century. Not only for you, but your betrothed. You were both suddenly taken out of the world, and by my hand. I just as suddenly followed you to the great unknown. I was punished for my sins; you for yours.

"You and your lover were returned to the world, destined one for the other, he one year in advance of you.

"In the time you remained on the other side you were taught the higher spiritual thoughts. You then returned to earth with such high inspirations and longings it seemed a place too low, too human for you to be at rest. That was your punishment.

"I was made guardian over you to atone for my sin. I watched over your childhood, forming and moulding you, making your earthly conditions happy ones.

"I was compelled to do all this in order to redeem myself. I watched over you both. I was the instrument of the higher powers to bring you together.

"Oh! it was hard, very hard," he wailed, "to see you so happy while I was serving out my punishment. Yet," he pathetically said, "it was a just one. I want to have you understand what I mean.

"We all have suffered; have all been in the wrong. I the greatest sinner. I must conquer myself so that your happiness will

make me happy and content. I have fought many desperate battles.

"Often at night while you slept I would come to you with my heart filled with rage and despair. I was then fighting my worldly nature, and sometimes it would gain the mastery. Then I would show you in your dreams glimpses of what you had been, and by a nameless horror and terror what was your end. You could not understand, yet it was torture nevertheless.

"After those times I suffered even more, and my punishment became still greater to bear. You, as I have said, had a mind attuned to heaven's music, yet you were put again upon the earth. That is a part of your punishment.

"Your betrothed is of things earthly, and vaguely recognizes you are far above him, and he cannot understand, cannot reach you in some thoughts. That is his punishment.

"Where he fails I have the power to come to you, mind to mind, soul to soul. He is excluded, and I alone remain absolute

master. That is my happiness; that will in time save me. Yes, redeem me.

"Your happiness is to know you will be his; heart, body, and a part of your soul" (strange isn't it), and he smiled.

"You will be his always, until what you call death parts you. He is given an abundance of wealth, a nature to enjoy it, and possession of you as far as human hearts and passions go. That is his happiness.

"Now, my child, you understand and know. Between this and your bridal morn, you must live again your first life. You must be what you were, and we three must again meet as we did before.

"I will come each night after your lover leaves you, for then and then alone I have the power. I must do this as a means of peace and rest for us all. I would spare you the pain, yet I know your happiness will far outweigh that.

"One thing I ask you to do. Give what you see and hear to the world. Unless you do, you can never find absolute peace and

rest. Now come. Once more you are my bride. Again I will lead you home."

I arose, and lo, my robes were of a splendor, fit for an empress. I found myself in a magnificent mansion, and by my side stood my lord and master looking every inch a king. I tried to control my feelings, then I heard him say:

"Welcome home, my queen! Welcome home, Lady Meusa Ravenwood, to my ancestral halls, as my wife."

DREAM SECOND.

The Heart's Awakening.

I looked around and saw numerous servants grouped in a stately hall. My husband introduced me to a prim old lady in black, as her new mistress. He then took my hand and presented me to each and every servant, saying to them :

"I hope you will serve your mistress in the future as well as you have served me in the past."

I was startled to see a little half-breed Indian girl throw herself at my feet, while she said :

"Zura love white lily ; Zura be true all time."

I put my hand on the head of the faithful girl, but my heart was too full of varied emotions to speak. Then my husband led me up the stately stairs, followed by the housekeeper and the little Indian girl. We reached a door and he stopped, saying :

"Meusa, my child, I have brought you to your door. The rooms are not the old ones, but new and more fitting for the mistress of my home. I will leave you now."

He then opened the door and left me. I looked around. The room was like some fairy's home. Every luxury and comfort that human ingenuity could devise was there. Zura came to me with a bound, threw herself at my feet, crying:

"Zura love white lily. Serve you well. Me be faithful."

I raised her from her knees. My eyes filled with tears at her devotion.

"Zura," I said, "I will try to be good to you, and I know, for my heart tells me, you will be faithful to me. I am glad to find such a true friend."

While she was combing my hair, my thoughts flew back to my mountain home, nothing more than a hut. I saw my mother, a dark handsome woman, whom I loved and loved passionately, lying dead and cold in our home, while father sat with me on his knee and sobbed as only strong men can.

Outside I heard the dismal howl of the wolf and the far-off cry of the panther waiting his prey.

Father dug her grave at night, while our one little lamp shed its rays from the window upon the ground. I pressed my baby face against the pane until my curls almost touched the lamp, in an endeavor to find companionship outside.

Inside with me my mother's cold silent form lay on the bed, while outside I could see black forms moving in the darkness, and I knew the wolves were coming as close as they dare.

When we buried her, father allowed me to help fill the grave with my baby hands. Then we entered our lonely home, not knowing what to do. He gathered me to his breast and told me how much I was like my mother, yet how unlike.

He told me, thinking to ease his aching heart, of how she longed to again go home to sunny Spain just once before she died.

Father was an Englishman. I inherited all the fire and impetuosity of my mother's

race, yet I had father's brown eyes and light curly hair.

They had come to America to retrieve their lost fortune, and in the end found themselves in a strange land, almost homeless and penniless.

Father and I lived as best we could without mother, until one day he fell ill. In my childish way I did what I could for him.

One day I crept upon the bed with him and cried myself to sleep. When I woke night had cast her shadows around. I called to father, but he made no answer. I thought he was sleeping, and tried to wake him but could not, and kissing him I crept away frightened.

The moon rose, and its silvery light filled the room. The awful stillness grew intolerable. I opened the door only to close it again, for the wolves were very near.

I climbed upon the chair and raised the window, crying aloud in my frightened misery, but my voice died away in the distance, and I received no answering cry, save

that of the wolves and panthers hungering for prey.

I watched and waited in the dread silence about me. Then I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and I knew that help was coming; some one had taken the short cut to Camp Rescue, and they would pass the house right by the window.

Nearer and nearer they came, and I listened with hushed breath, until a horseman rode out of the darkness right under my window, and I heard a boyish voice say:

"Hello, little one, what's the trouble?"

I told him father was sleeping, and I could not wake him.

He dismounted, took one look at the still face on the bed, exclaiming, "What a place for a child!"

It was Paul Ravenwood, the son of Lord Ravenwood, the rich Englishman, who lived in the handsome house over the hill. He turned to me, exclaiming:

"My father is dying; I am going to Camp Rescue for the doctor. Come; I will take you with me."

"No, no!" I cried; "I cannot leave poor father all alone. The wolves might hurt him."

"Then remain here; I will soon be back with help from the camp," thus with a kind word and encouraging smile he left me.

I climbed upon the chair and took up my vigil at the window. I did not know father was dead, yet I had a strange feeling of terror when I looked at him.

Paul soon returned with the doctor and two men from the camp. Then he gathered me up in his arms and took me to his home —to a new life.

Paul's father died and I remained, looking upon him as my big brother. I made Ravenwood Hall my home until I was fifteen, then I was sent to a convent in the East to be educated.

One day I was summoned home, to hear from Paul that I was to become his wife. I did not love him, but he was my only friend, and I would not grieve him by a refusal. I became his wife while my heart was still

sleeping, and I knew Paul could never wake it.

I was suddenly brought back to reality by Zura saying:

"Me no like you look sad. Me want you be happy long, long time. You too beautiful to look sad."

I arose and looked in the mirror. I was indeed beautiful. Paul had often told me, when a child, I would be a beautiful lady, and as my mirror reflected my face and form I knew he was right. I descended the well-remembered stairs, pushed aside the hangings and entered the drawing-room. I found Paul there, and with him a stranger. He came to meet me, and led me forward, saying:

"Meusa, this is my cousin, Ormond Radnor. I hope you will be friends."

I raised my eyes; I looked at him. He looked at me, and in that look my heart awoke too late; I knew, too late.

DREAM THIRD.

The Serpent in Paradise.

The morning after my arrival home I woke to find the sun shining in my window, and outside I heard the birds chatter and sing in their freedom and happiness. I raised myself upon my elbow and looked around. On a little gold table I saw a beautiful bunch of white lilies. I inquired of Zura, who brought the flowers.

"Master Paul," she answered; "he brought them. Put them there himself. Wouldn't let poor Zura touch them. He put them on little table, so you see them first thing you open your eyes."

"Bring them to me; I want to see what kind of lilies they are," I smilingly asked. I was growing interested. She brought them and placed them in my hands. They were indeed beautiful.

I recognized them as one of Paul's especial pride and care, and I smiled as I remem-

bered the many quarrels they caused between us when I was a little child and he a hot-headed, impetuous boy. In the center of the flowers I found a note.

"I bring you these flowers as a peace offering. I hope you will accept them in the spirit I send them. You can always tell what my thoughts are concerning you by the morning offering I send you. Don't grow superstitious over this. It is only a whim of mine and it will afford amusement for us both. You can know my moods by the flowers you receive. I will use them to transmit my thoughts to you."

The letter dropped from my hand, and a chill crept through me that was not caused by the morning air. I sprang from my bed and quickly dressed. I learned that the gentlemen had breakfasted and gone out, Paul leaving word that I must not be disturbed.

Zura brought breakfast to my room, and after eating it with a relish, I sallied forth to visit my childhood haunts.

What a glorious morning it was! The birds and flowers looked radiant with happiness and sunshine.

As I wandered in happy freedom among the flowers and trees I realized what a lovely home it was. I felt very grateful to Paul for what he had done for me, yet I shuddered when I remembered I was his wife.

At one moment my heart went out to him in gratitude and thankfulness, and in another I was grinding my teeth with rage because I was no longer a free and careless girl.

Paul, I somehow thought, did not love me as a husband should love his wife. But I knew he took pride in possessing me as if I was some great doll. He was kind, and heaped all manner of loving attention upon me, yet it was all hateful to me. I longed to have him as I did in my happy childhood—father and brother in one.

I was beginning to learn that too much love lavished upon one is sometimes worse than none at all. My heart told me I could never love him as a husband, yet I knew I could love if I allowed myself to do so, for my heart had whispered that secret to me, alas! too late.

I reached a beautiful little house that I

knew to be the bird and flower house. How I had loved the place, with its bright flowers and white cooing doves. It was one of Paul's hobbies, when a boy, and he had not given it up even now that he was grown to manhood.

I was eagerly anxious to see what improvements he had made, for he told me he had a surprise in store for me when I saw "Paradise." That was what we called it.

I tripped up the marble steps, two at a time, in my eagerness to enter. How grand it was. A white dove circled my head, then perched upon my shoulder; but to me it had a startled, frightened look. As I stroked it with my hand, it softly pecked my fingers, as if it recognized my loving caress.

I heard voices, and I followed in the direction from which the sound came. Back of a large palm I found Paul and Mr. Radnor. They were standing in front of a large glass case covered with flowers, and supported by marble pillars and, oh horrors! in it I saw the largest snake I ever beheld. I shuddered and started back in frightened horror, and the

dove flew away with a wild fluttering of its wings.

Paul caught my hand and drew me to him, crying :

"You little coward, you were going to run away without even bidding us good-morning."

I raised my eyes to those of Mr. Radnor, and faltered a weak good-morning, but in his eyes I read sympathy for my fears. Then I glanced at Paul, and read possession and mastery in his face, and I knew then, when my husband held my hand with a firm unyielding grasp, the other held my heart by the golden chains of love, and I knew just as well as if he had told me on his bended knee that he loved me.

"Please, Paul, let go my hand," I cried ; "you hurt me. I imagine I am a poor little bird, and you mean to give me to that awful snake."

"Strange, I was thinking the same thing," Mr. Radnor cried ; "I thought of the dove and the serpent – beg pardon, Ravenwood," he quickly said, "I meant, of course—"

"No apology is neceesary," Paul loftily answered. "You are two silly sentimental young people. Of course, I can't expect you to look upon the common sense side of life as an old fellow like me. I say, Radnor, won't you show Meusa the improvements on the place? I have some urgent business to attend to."

"Don't trouble Mr. Radnor," I cried, for I dreaded to be left alone with him, for I knew we were

> "Two souls with but a single thought,
> Two hearts that beat as one."

"Nothing will be a trouble for me that I do for you," Mr. Radnor answered, and oh! what music there was in his voice.

Then, before I could reply, Paul strode off leaving us alone. I knew Paul's habits of old. He was an old bookworm and forgot everything else when with his pet volumes in his study. I looked at my companion, and he smilingly said:

"I think you understand what his urgent business is."

"Yes," I laughed; "one of his pet books

upon some dry subject, and imprisonment in the library for the rest of this beautiful morning. Come away," I cried, as I cast my eyes upon the snake; "I don't care to remain here. It makes me shudder when I think of that nasty thing in our beautiful Paradise."

He smiled as we walked away. Then he told me how Paul had procured the snake at a big expense because he loved it, "and he really thought it would please you," Mr. Radnor said. "I know he must feel a little disappointed."

"That is just like Paul," I answered; "he has none of my woman's fears and of course thinks my dislike for it silly."

We sat down on a bench in a nook near the fountain. He gathered me a bunch of flowers, beautiful white violets and purple pansies. I looked at him while he was arranging them.

He was just the opposite of Paul. His whole appearance called to my mind the knights of old who lived for love, and when the call came died for it.

He was not as handsome as Paul, but on his face was loving sympathy, while upon Paul's you could read contempt and pity for other's weaknesses.

He placed the flowers in my lap, remarking:

"To me there is nothing sweeter than violets and pansies. Do you know, looking at the violets reminds me of you? I know they are no purer than your thoughts."

I found my face flushing crimson, for at that very moment I was rebelling at my fate, and wondering why I could not have loved and married this man in place of Paul, whom I respected but could never love. He very kindly ignored my crimson face and continued.

"Lady Ravenwood, I hope we will be friends. I feel very lonely at times." His lips quivered as he continued: "I had a dear sister, but she died. We were all alone in the world, she and I; now that she has left me I have no one. I have some far-off relatives I never knew, but I mean friends. It was very kind in Paul to ask me here

when he heard of my loss; I came, and even if we are not altogether congenial companions, my coming has brightened up my sad existence and put a little sunshine in my sorrowful life. I feel I could live again. I mean live, not merely exist, if you will try to like me and be my friend."

Like him? I had not known him twenty-four hours, and I knew I loved him, yet I dared not dwell upon that word. Reason forbade it and warped it into like. Now he was asking me to be his friend; to try and like him, while the trial on my part must be not to like him, not to love him.

But I did what other blind foolish mortals do—made myself believe I could stamp out love by friendship. I had enough faith in myself to think I could be a sister to the man I loved, while all the time I knew he loved me.

"I will try and be a sister to you," I replied, with beating heart and downcast eyes, and all the time I hated myself for saying it. "I will try to be your friend."

"Do you think we can be friends?" he

asked. "I notice your hair and eyes are the color of mine. According to learned men we should be opposites in order to be firm friends."

"I don't think it depends on outward appearances. It is heart speaks to heart, soul to soul; the inner self is formed by the higher powers, while our outward selves are formed by man and nature and other influences. I only know what my reason tells me. What another may think right, might be wrong for me. Then why should I be wrong when my own reason can guide me right?"

"You are quite a believer in your own theories, I see," he smilingly answered. "But come; I will show you the new horses. I think Paul a lucky fellow. All he does is wish, and lo! it is gratified."

I had the opportunity to see in numerous ways what a noble man he was; how kind and gentle. Perhaps too gentle when the time came for him to withstand some great temptation. But now it seemed to me so beautiful. It was such a contrast to Paul's

way. He was inclined to laugh at pain as well as pleasure.

I looked at the clock on the tower. It was half-past one. "Lunch time," I cried. We hastened to the house, found Paul in the drawing-room, lazily sitting in his favorite arm-chair.

After lunch I went to my room and took a long refreshing nap. I woke to find Zura softly going about talking in a low voice.

"What is the matter, Zura?" I inquired.

"Me no like it," she cried. "Ugh! make me think of bad spirit."

"What makes you think of bad spirit?" I again inquired.

"Snake," she abruptly said. "Me hate, me like to kill. Me feel much trouble come. Ugh!"

"Don't be foolish," I quickly answered, for I saw the poor little Indian was very much in earnest.

She did not heed my interruption, but continued, "Master love you, he love snake. How can he love good spirit and bad one too?"

I comforted her as best I could, and then dressed and went to the drawing-room. Sitting down by the window I commenced to sing softly to myself.

Paul soon entered with a letter in his hand. He told me it was from an old friend of his and that she was coming to pay us a visit. "She is a widow," he said, "and I met her while you were at school."

It did not interest me greatly, and after giving the necessary orders for her comfort I quite forgot about it.

After dinner Mr. Radnor came to me and told me Paul had gone down to Paradise. We both smiled. It did sound odd. We chatted for some time, and each discovered that the other sang. I sat down and played the accompaniment, our voices blending nicely. We came to a trio we were anxious to try.

Mr. Radnor volunteered to go in search of Paul. I arose, saying I would go with him, and he said, "We will first go to Paradise." We smiled again.

We walked in silence, and I entered the

place, not without a shudder, for now that the serpent had entered my Paradise I did not like it. We found Paul where I expected we would, in front of the case containing the snake. In his hand he held a dove.

I quickly cried, "What are you doing, Paul?"

"Wait and see," he laughed, sliding the glass at the top of the case, and dropping the bird inside.

I caught his arm and cried, "Oh, Paul! don't. How cruel. That awful snake will hurt it."

He seized my hand, and laughed in the same way he did when I was a child and he my master, in evident enjoyment of my fears.

"You are a little coward. Hurt it," he said, "why the snake will swallow it. That only goes to prove the weaker must succumb to the stronger. The snake in this case is the stronger, and if the dove can't eat the snake, why naturally the snake will eat the dove. That is all."

All the hot blood that I inherited from my mother leaped in my veins. I turned to him, crying:

"Paul Ravenwood, you profess to be a man, a gentleman. Yet you put that helpless dove in a place where it has no chance to battle for its life. You doom it to death, and then because it cannot save itself you cry it is the weaker of the two. Open the door and then see which is the stronger, the serpent or the dove. Would the poor dove sit in the farthest corner and patiently wait for its death? No!" I screamed, my face almost purple with rage, "it would stretch out its wings and fly far away. I hate you!"

He smiled. Such an indulgent pitying smile that made me more furious than ever.

"Yes, the dove might fly if the door was open," he said in a smooth even tone, "providing the snake did not charm it and hold it motionless until it triumphed. Shall I try it?" with another of his awful superior laughs. He caught my hand, saying:

"It is too late, it couldn't fly now."

I forgot all my rage when he called my attention to that poor little dove. It crouched in a corner, its eyes distended with fear and terror. It would raise its wings spasmodically, then look at the snake apparently fascinated. The snake was moving its body and darting its tongue as if it knew the torture it was inflicting upon its prey.

"Let me go," I screamed; "I won't stay."

Paul clutched my arm with a firm unyielding grasp and calmly said:

"Meusa, you will stay. I am ashamed of you. You must, I say, must learn to control your feelings, and now is just as good a time as any to begin."

I saw there was no hope for my escape. I looked again, the snake was toying with its victim. I cast a glance of entreaty at Mr. Radnor, yet had I stopped to think I might have known he was powerless to help me.

In that one glance I saw his long white fingers pressed in his hands until I knew the nails were cutting the flesh, but he

stood motionless, his eyes filled with love and pity for me.

I saw Paul's dark handsome face wearing a look of enjoyment ; the snake had reached the dove. There was a fluttering of white wings and I fainted.

DREAM FOURTH.

Rivals, Yet Friends.

I found the accustomed bouquet upon my table the next morning, but it was of white roses, with the exception of a delicate pink one, which was half concealed. It set me thinking, seriously thinking.

All the horrible details of the night previous came back to me. I again saw Paul's face, and I knew he did not yet realize that I had passed my childhood days and was now a woman.

He still looked upon me as a child who belonged to him, to scold, pet and torture as he pleased.

But to me all things were changed. I was a woman, and I wanted to be treated as one; I was his wife, and I rebelled at his forced rule. And again I found my heart rebelling against fate for making me his wife.

I realized what an effort it must have cost Mr. Radnor to control himself, for I knew he

longed to knock Paul senseless at my feet. I was always sympathetic and tender-hearted as a child, and it was the cause of many of our quarrels.

Zura brought me a letter, with the remark that "Master told me to say you needn't hurry." I opened the note and read:

"DEAR MEUSA:—

"I trust you are over your fright. I have still faith in my methods, and hope to make you brave and strong yet. Ormond and I don't agree, but of course he doesn't count.

"Mrs. Archibald arrives this morning. I am going to meet her. Won't be back much before lunch.

"PAUL."

I fell to wandering who this woman was. I heard Paul speak of her as a very good friend; further than that I knew nothing of her.

After I ate my breakfast I went out in the grounds. It being very warm, I took my book and went down to the lake; selecting a shady nook, I began to read. I soon grew drowsy and fell asleep, with the book under my head for a pillow.

I dreamed of a future for me. Such a one could not exist save in dreams. I opened my eyes in a sudden, jerky way, and saw Paul gazing down upon me.

"What a foolish child you are," he said. "I have been hunting everywhere for you. It is almost lunch time and I know Mrs. Archibald must be almost famished." Taking me by the hands, he brought me to my feet, saying, "Meusa, I wonder why I married you. Sometimes I like you, nay almost love you; then again I positively hate you for your will and independence, and I feel as if not one sympathetic thought existed between us."

"Perhaps," I suggested, gathering up my hat and book, "we weren't intended for one another."

"Nonsense," he cried; "that is all rubbish. I believe there is more in nature and common sense to draw human beings together than that thing every one is talking of and but few have felt. I mean love."

"Never mind," I cried, anxious to escape an argument; "tell me of our guest. Is she

tall, or is she small? Is she dark, or is she fair?''

''Look for yourself,'' he answered.

I looked and, womanlike, was at once interested. I saw a little woman, with a sweet face and raven hair that looked almost purple in the sunlight; her clear olive skin looked perfect in its frame of jet black hair; her dress was a creamy white, relieved by a bunch of jack roses. I know I looked my admiration, for she smiled as her eyes met mine.

Paul introduced us, remarking, ''I hope you may be friends.''

I apologized for my untidy appearance, and, excusing myself, left them to change my soiled morning gown for something more becoming.

I was rushing along the hall and ran right into Mr. Radnor's arms. I made a startled exclamation and apologized for my rudeness. But how my heart did beat when I heard him say:

''No apology is necessary. I am glad I was the cause of your stumbling, for I saved you a fall.''

I blushed, but answered quickly, "I was hurrying to change my dress. I have been asleep all the morning down by the lake."

"I saw you," he quietly answered; "I was fishing from the opposite side."

"What did you catch?" I gayly cried. He stooped and whispered something in my ear that made the hot blood surge to my face, and I flew to my room for shelter.

(NOTE.—Here Mrs. Russel's manuscript grew so confused and disconnected that Miss Dormer was obliged to recopy it in the third person.)

Below on the balcony Paul was in earnest conversation with Mrs. Archibald. Her eyes were flashing, as she in a low voice said:

"You ask of me an impossibility. How can I do what no human heart will do? I will do my best, but I fear that will be very bad. You told me I should be mistress of your heart and home; you basely deceived me by placing your queenly protégé in my place. I gave you all I possessed; my life, my heart, and how have you repaid me?"

He saw she was about to cry, and quickly answered:

"Edna, why not try to be reasonable? You shall never know what the want of money is; you shall have half I possess, if you desire it, but I am afraid I can no longer love you. There is not much love in my nature. I cannot love as most men do. I love my books and pet theories as some men love women. I am married now, and I fear what love I have to give is given my wife. Yet I could live without her and be very happy. I fear you cannot understand me, but in time I hope you will."

"No, I do not understand you," she hotly cried, "nor do you know yourself. Perhaps the day will come when you will know what love is. Then you can feel what I have suffered. You have been accustomed to simply ask and it was yours. Some day you may have to beg for what you now throw carelessly away. Money," she bitterly continued, "always money. You men play with our hearts, you steal our very existence, then repay our devotion by offering money to

heal our heartaches. I want money, yes, but only when it gives me you and makes me happy with you. Oh, Paul!" and her lip quivered painfully, "take me back to your heart once more; I don't ask you that which is impossible; I don't ask you to neglect your wife; I only ask you for the time you can spare without the neglect of any duty. I know the world would condemn me, would call me wrong, but Paul, it can't see my heart or feel the heavy aching there; I don't think I am wrong to ask of you a little love. That is all I ask, Paul; all I ask."

He was moved by her words, her devotion. She was so childish, so pretty in her misery. But he knew he must not raise false hopes within her.

After giving her time to control her emotions he gently said:

"Edna, I always liked you for the amount of good common sense you possessed. You attracted me more on that account than any other. It was very refreshing to me to sit down with a woman young, beautiful and talented, who could sympathize with my

hobbies and talk common sense, and sound sense at that, with me. My dear girl, let that sense rule you now. I knew you would be unhappy here, but you were determined to come, and I have allowed you to have your own way. Get what happiness you can while you are here. A friend to you I will always be. My money and thoughts, if they will be of service to you, shall be yours. Do as you please, but you must not interfere with Meusa as far as her happiness is concerned. You must not try to induce me to go back to the old life; if you do, I may grow to hate you where now I respect and esteem you."

"Thank you for the warning," she replied; "I shall not interfere with Lady Ravenwood, for the simple reason she does not possess your love, and that is all I ask."

She had grasped the situation, and saw at a glance she must go slowly if she wished to conquer in the end. She loved this man; had sacrificed much for him. Then she found, like many others, that after a few months she was thrown aside like an old

glove, torn and soiled, the stains a continual reminder of the time when they did not exist.

"Paul," she said, forcing back her emotions with a mighty effort, "I will do as you say. I will try to be a friend to your wife in all things, and of course true to her, means true to you also."

He knew she meant what she said, for a promise was to her a sacred thing. He took her little hand, stroked it gently, and said:

"I knew you would prove the brave girl I have always believed you to be, and some day I shall reward you by finding you a rich husband," and smiling, he walked away.

She looked after him and muttered, "Yes, I think you will. But the man of your choice, I think, will be a surprise to you."

Then she vehemently kissed the hand he had held until there were great red marks upon it.

She was startled to hear Lady Ravenwood say:

"The luncheon bell has rung and I came to find you."

Edna raised her eyes to those of her rival and was startled to hear her say:

"Mrs. Archibald, I am so glad you came. I am sure I shall like you. Won't you try to be my friend? I am so lonely."

Edna's eyes dropped to the floor as she slowly answered:

"I will," and silently followed her rival and hostess to the dining-room

DREAM FIFTH.

The Story of a Life.

The first morning after Edna's arrival proved to be a dreary rainy one. The flowers stood drinking in the refreshing drops, grateful for the change. But inside the house the ladies looked gloomy and sad.

Lady Ravenwood had planned a ride over the country with her guest and Ormond. Now the steady down-pouring rain spoiled it all.

Ormond had gone to a neighbor's house on an errand, and Paul had shut himself up with his books, leaving the ladies alone to amuse themselves as best they could.

They were sitting in low rockers by the window. Meusa was embroidering some fine table linen and Edna was trying to get interested in a new novel. Silence reigned for some time; when Edna shut her book with a snap, saying:

"Lady Ravenwood, you are a very fortunate woman, and ought to be a very happy

one. You have a loving husband, and a handsome one; money and plenty of it; a fine home with servants at your command. What more can mortals want."

Meusa looked at Edna and saw two little red spots glowing on her cheeks, but she answered in an indifferent tone of voice:

"Yes, I have been told that many times, and have commenced to think perhaps I am one of fortune's favorites. But whether I am grateful for that favoritism I am not quite sure."

"I thought I would find it so," Edna said to herself, and that little discovery made her quite happy, and she liked Meusa all the better.

"You see," she said aloud, "the world judges by outward appearances, and I, only knowing you for so short a time, do the same. But of course you are happy, for such a combination of blessings as you possess can bring nothing but happiness."

"I don't know," Meusa persisted, "Paul treats me often as he would a child, and I tell you frankly I don't like it. It makes

me feel very small and unhappy at times, and having been married yourself you must know that married life is not always a bed of roses. Was yours?'' she innocently inquired.

She saw a bright flush mount to Edna's brow, and realizing what a personal question she had asked, quickly said, ''Pardon me; I should not have asked that.''

''Never mind,'' replied Edna, ''I don't mind telling you that my life has been a very unhappy one. My married life was a wretched farce, and my widowhood has been a sad failure. I did not love my husband.''

''Does the lack of love make all marriages wretched and a failure?'' Meusa innocently inquired.

''I cannot say,'' answered Edna; ''but I do know it made my life a perfect torture. I always saw the word duty painted in big black letters before me, and I knew that meant for me misery, anguish and despair. My husband, poor fellow, loved me, and clung to me like a little child, and I hated his every caress. My heart would be filled

with loathing and despair while my face was wreathed in smiles, for you know duty brought and forced them there. I could not harden my heart sufficiently to tell him the truth, and I bore my misery in silence and alone."

"I don't think I could do that," Meusa cried; "you were very brave, much more so than I ever could be. But now you are free and can be happy."

"Did I not tell you," answered Edna, "that my widowhood was a failure? If you care to listen I will tell you my story. I like you, Lady Ravenwood, and I do hope you may reciprocate my feelings."

"Don't call me Lady Ravenwood, call me Meusa," her companion answered, "then I can call you Edna. But before you tell your story let us pledge eternal friendship. I never met any one I liked as I do you, and I always longed for a friend of my own sex. You know I never have had any one but Paul, and in that line he is so unsatisfactory. Here," she hurriedly said, "is a ring Paul gave me on one of my birthdays.

Will you accept it as a reminder of my friendship?''

Edna looked at her hand, then at Meusa, in perplexity. Taking the ring she stammered, ''thank you, thank you.'' She looked at her hand again, then at Meusa, then suddenly drawing a small gold ring from her finger, she said:

''This ring I value the most of anything on earth. You see there are two hearts linked together. The fire of love in those hearts is represented by the sparkling diamonds embedded in them. You see the gem in one has fallen out. It is lost forever. I have not replaced it, I never can. Take it, wear it as a pledge of my friendship for you and yours. It was given me by'' — in her heart she cried ''Paul,'' to Meusa — ''a very dear friend.''

She placed the ring on Meusa's finger, and Meusa, like a pleased child, cried:

''What a sweet fancy. Edna won't you allow me to replace the gem? It is a pity to have such a beautiful ring marred.''

Edna looked up at her with a startled

glance crying, "You don't know what you say, child, you can never do that."

"Oh, yes I can," Meusa cried, "Paul will help me. He will get the diamond for me."

Edna was white to the lips. Every word Meusa had uttered cut her like a knife; she knew of course she was simply speaking of the stone, yet it seemed to Edna something more. Could and would Meusa ever replace the fire in that heart? She fell into a painful reverie, and at last was aroused by Meusa saying in a rather pained voice:

"Edna, I fear I have displeased you. You are so quiet and sad. Please tell me your story."

Edna looked at her with great sorrowful eyes, and in a sad voice commenced:

"You called me brave. Wait until I have told you all, then I will hear what you think of me. I did not love my husband, neither did I love any one. One day I met a stranger, tall, dark and handsome. We were poor while he was rich. I met him often at an aunt's of mine, and before I had

known him long I knew what love was and he had taught me. Then I contrasted my life to what it might have been, and I was even more wretched than before. One day he called at our home, bringing me a message from my aunt. He found me in tears; my accounts were all tangled up; nothing would come out right. I was obliged to make one dollar do the duty of five, and I found I was in a hopeless muddle. He, like an old friend, tried to help me unravel my household tangle. He was so kind, so sympathetic, my heart yearned to throw its burden upon his strong shoulders. Little by little he prepared me for what was coming, and when he told me he loved me I was not startled. But then the thought of duty to my husband rose before me and I grew furious at myself, and the world, and lastly at him.''

'''How dare you talk of love to me, I the wife of another!'

''He looked into my eyes and smilingly said:

'''Because I know you love me.'

"Then grasping my hands he passionately cried:

"'Listen to me. I am free, I am rich, I love you, and I know you love me. You are bound to another but I will wait for you. Tell me that you do love me, and I will never speak of love to you again as long as you are not free.'

"He gathered me in his arms and I sobbed out my misery and wretchedness. Kissing me, he said:

"'Now I am satisfied. You will love me, and I can wait years if necessary until you are free. I will not do or talk again as I have to-day. Come,' he softly said, 'I will kiss your tears away and after that I am your friend only.'

"He did as he said, kissed my tears away, then coolly sat me down on the chair opposite, took the account book up and commenced to add up my scraggy figures, as if no such thing as love existed. But I could not put it from me. It opened to me visions of a new and happy life, and my present lot seemed tenfold harder to bear. But he

was true to his word. He met me as a friend, nothing more. Womanlike, I began to think he did not love me, and of course grew wretched in the thought.

"One day things were worse than usual; I was in despair. In the midst of it he came. I could see love in his eyes, but never a word or action from him to assure me of it. I knew he had no right to say, nor I to listen to him, 'I love you.'

"He inquired in a gentle voice why I was so silent, and I answered by bursting into tears. He stood irresolute, looked around as if to find some means of escape, then in an instant his whole demeanor changed. He came toward me, and in a moment I was in his arms and he was raining passionate kisses on my face. I then and there told him how wretched, how unendurable my life was, and how I longed to be free to love him and allow him to make me happy.

"Don't blame him, Meusa, I was the weak one; I tempted him. But my misery made me weak. Had I been a strong woman I would not have done as I did. But my

wretched life had made me pitifully weak and helpless, and I could not help confiding in him, when I knew he loved me, and he of course was but a man, not an angel. He listened to me in silence. When I had sobbed myself quiet, he said:

"'I see no way out of this but for you to tell your husband the truth and abide the result.'"

"I looked at him in horror and gasped, 'Why he loves me.'

"'The more reason why he should give you up. If he truly loves you, he will want to see you happy. Take my advice and try it,' he gently said.

"'But suppose he does give me up,' I faltered, 'what then?'

"'You will be mine,' he quickly answered. 'I will look after you. Take time to think it over and let me know your decision,' and he took his hat and left me without another word. That night when my husband came home he was very gentle and kind, and in the condition my mind was I could not endure it. I fell at his feet and confessed all."

"What did he do?" gasped Meusa.

"He did nothing," Edna replied, "but look at me and say:

"'I loved you so, I loved you so.' Then he turned from me, saying, 'don't worry, child; it will all come right.'

"He never was the same again. I wrote a letter to the man I loved, telling him all. Oh! the agony of those days. My patient, gentle husband's face was always a reminder of what I had done, yet I was glad I did it.

"One day he came home earlier than usual, and complained of being tired. I fixed the couch with the softest pillows, and he laid down to sleep. When I went to tell him our simple tea was ready I could not wake him. He was dead. I had killed him. Broken his faithful loving heart by confessing the truth.

"I was a widow some time before I wrote to my love. I received an answer telling me he was coming to see me. When he came I forgot my remorse, my regrets, and remembered only that I was free and my love was with me. We were happy, very happy.

He could not marry me lest the world might talk. I must wait the proper time, in the eyes of the world, to be made his wife. I did not care. I loved him, trusted him, and was supremely happy.

"One day he came and told me he must leave me for a time, and when he returned we would never part again.

"One bright spring day I sat at my window sewing on a piece of fancy work for my wedding outfit, and humming a song that sprang from my heart, because it was glad. I received a letter that made life a blank for me. It was from my love, and told me —"

"What!" exclaimed Meusa, springing up from her chair.

"It told me," quietly answered Edna, "he had deserted me. That he was about to wed another."

"The wretch," cried Meusa, her eyes flashing the scorn and indignation she felt.

"What a heartless brute he must have been, and how you must have suffered."

"Yes," wearily answered Edna; "I did

suffer and I still do, but the first blow is over. I am now better able to bear it."

"Do you not long for vengeance?" Meusa cried. "Were I in your place, I would never rest until I had made him suffer every heart-ache he caused me to suffer. I would give him blow for blow."

"I do not hate him, child," Edna answered, a wan smile playing about her mouth at Meusa's vehemence. "I love him, and long only for some part in his life, even that of a servant. I only live for the time to come that I can win him back without causing the innocent to suffer as I once did."

"Do you mind telling me what you know of his wife?" Meusa asked.

"I have heard," Edna gravely answered, "that she is young, beautiful, fair and good, and I would rather die than do anything to injure her. But come," she continued, "let us talk of something else, or still better, you sing to me. I believe I am tired."

"Forgive me," impulsively cried Meusa. "I know you must suffer. You say you would not injure his wife. Perhaps she does

not love him. Find out if possible, and if she doesn't I will help you to win him back. I know he has wronged you, outraged your womanhood, yet you love him. You are one in a thousand and I will help you. You may be happy yet."

Edna was silently weeping. Meusa seeing her bowed head and shaking figure softly stole from the room.

DREAM SIXTH.

Forbidden Love.

Paul Ravenwood went along all unconscious of the future fate had in store for him. He was happy with his books and pets, and well knew Meusa could fill her days independent of him, and not miss him. He was too matter of fact to think she loved him. He had written and told her she was to be his bride, and it never occurred to her to say anything to the contrary.

She looked upon him as her protector and only friend, and she was always accustomed to allow him to have his own way. If she did fight for her rights it always ended in her defeat.

Paul was contented to know she belonged to him, even though she did not love him, for if she had, in time it would have bored him. He hugged the thought that she loved no one else. He was jealous only of possessing and ruling her, not of loving her

and being loved. The thought of her loving Ormond did not enter his mind.

Grand passions wearied him. That was why Edna lost him. She allowed him to see and know the depth of her love, when he would have preferred to explore her heart at his leisure and find it out little by little for himself. He truly loved her for a time, but too much love wearied him. He wanted a loving woman and a comrade in one.

But Edna had lived such a wretched life that all of her pent-up love was showered upon him, and he in time grew weary and disappointed in his choice. Had he the patience to have waited he would have found what he expected, a true loving comrade and an intellectual helpmate.

He was startled and surprised to hear from her after his marriage, and have her tell him she was coming to see him. He was too much engaged at the time upon a new theory to combat her will, and she came, and the tragedy of his life began.

He saw her, and after their first interview thought there would be no more trouble.

Men should learn that the quieter an outraged woman is the more terrible will be the day of reckoning when it comes.

There are women in the world who have suffered such agony of mind and soul that after the first few awful struggles are over their misery grows, settles, and takes root way down out of sight, and in time they become contented in the thought that they are wretched. That is the woman to fear, not pity.

Meusa went to the drawing-room to devote two of her morning hours to practicing her music. There she found Ormond and Edna. Immediately on her entering Edna called :

"Meusa, come here. Oh, you needn't be surprised," addressing Ormond, "we are the best of friends. I call her Meusa and she honors me by calling me Edna."

"I think," slowly replied Ormond, "I have been somewhat slighted. Lady Ravenwood has promised to be a sister to me, yet she has not accorded me that sweet privilege. Won't you intercede for me, Mrs. Archibald?"

"Certainly," answered the lady. "He may call you Meusa, mayn't he, dear? You know you are a sort of relation after all."

Meusa looked at him in a helpless way, and found herself almost stammering, "Yes, if he so wishes."

"It will make me very happy, indeed," almost reverently, he replied. "But there is one condition. You must call me Ormond?"

A glad light leaped to Meusa's eyes, and Edna quick to read, saw it, and the truth flashed upon her, and in her heart she cried:

"Oh, God! that I read aright. If so there may be happiness for us yet, but not at any sacrifice. No," she murmured, "none this time, none this time."

But she gathered herself together and gayly cried:

"We were discussing Paul, and saying how thoroughly American he is. He was born in this country, but has the misfortune of being the only son of an English Milord, yet he would rather be plain Mr. But the miners and his friends will not forget he

is a lord, and the title still clings to him. Come," she said, rising, "let us go down to the lake. It is very warm here."

On their way they saw Paul enter Paradise, and Meusa shuddered and cried:

"That dreadful snake. I wish it would die."

"What snake?" inquired Edna.

"One he bought and keeps in Paradise. Haven't you heard of it or seen it?" inquired Meusa.

"No," slowly answered Edna; "I am sorry. I fear that means woe to some Eve. I think I will go down and see it if you don't mind," and she smiled, but her lips quivered as she left them.

Mind, of course they did not mind being left alone. They reached the lake in silence, both too happy to talk. Meusa turned, and Ormond could see the love shining in her eyes as, like an impulsive child, she cried:

"Oh, I am so happy!"

Then she realized what she had said, and the hot blood mounted to her face making it a vivid scarlet.

Ormond took one step toward her then stopped, for he knew he must fight his love for this woman, who was the wife of his relative and friend. Yet how could he, if she, in an unguarded moment had shown her love for him. For in that one exclamation she told him all.

He looked around in a helpless, irresolute way; Meusa was gathering some wild flowers that grew on the edge of the lake. She reached for one that grew far out, and, losing her footing, fell with a heavy splash into the water.

Quick as a flash Ormond followed her, to find she did not come up. Out in the center he saw the water agitated, then her golden head appeared, and suddenly from out of the water a white hand threw him a kiss.

The lake was a small artificial one, but very deep. Ormond swam to her and found her enjoying herself as if she were a mermaid. She was a fine swimmer; her hair had become unfastened and floated in a golden cloud about her. When he recovered his breath he cried:

"For shame. I believe you did it intentionally, meaning to frighten me."

"No, no," she panted; "but after it was done, I might as well enjoy myself, and I do so love to swim. What on earth would Paul say if he saw us swimming in our street clothes, like two lunatics? Wouldn't I like to see his face? He would think I was a child, and send me supperless to bed."

She sprang with a bound to the bank and disappeared behind the trees.

Ormond followed her leisurely. He went to his room to change his clothes and dream of the woman he loved. An intense longing took possession of him to have her at any cost. How could he live without her? Yet how could he betray Paul, his relative and almost only friend?

In the meantime, Edna made her way to Paradise where she had seen Paul enter. She slowly mounted the steps and looked about her. She thought she had in truth entered Paradise; everything was so beautiful, and to her the most divine thought of

all was that Paul was there—the man who had made her suffer, yet still she loved him with an undying devotion. He was sitting beside his favorite, reading. He did not hear her approaching until she was by his side and saying:

"I hope you will pardon this intrusion, but Meusa told me of your favorite here and I longed to see it. I saw you enter and followed you."

He looked at her in mingled admiration and amazement. How different she was from his wife, whom he could not coax there to see his favorite, and here was Edna asking and longing to see it. His delight knew no bounds when, stepping to the case, she cried:

"Oh, Paul! how beautiful. When I see a beautiful snake I always feel like stroking it, yet I fear them."

Paul laid aside his book and was at her side in an instant. He told her of the trouble and expense he was put to to get the snake, and how he thought it was a grand work of nature, what new ideas it gave him, and how

much enjoyment he gained by having it there.

Edna saw her advantage, and quickly followed it up by sweetly saying:

"Do tell me all about it," and then for two hours she very patiently listened to his melodious voice telling her his new theories and pet hobbies. Sometimes he would stop in the midst of a sentence and exclaim, more to himself than to her!

"This is indeed a pleasure!"

After a time he looked at his watch and exclaimed:

"I declare, little girl, you have positively given me a treat. I haven't had such a pleasant two hours since—" and he stopped in embarrassment.

"Finish it," Edna said, calmly. "Since you last talked with me?"

"Well, yes," he answered; "and I believe I feel better than I have since that time. Now Edna, pardon me for speaking so," he earnestly said, "but I know we can be good friends and comrades even in spite of the past. Don't you think so?"

"I hope so," she replied, without a quiver of her lips, yet all the time longing to throw herself at his feet and tell him of her heart hunger and wretchedness. Yet she sat outwardly calm, while her heart was so filled with love it seemed to her it must break.

Paul looked at her and abruptly said:

"Edna, how old are you?"

"What a bad memory you have," she answered, "I was twenty-seven my last birthday. Why do you ask?"

"Because," he gravely answered, I see a number of almost invisible wrinkles on your smooth baby face, and I could not help wondering what had brought them there."

"Do you want me to tell you?"

But before he had time to answer, she continued in a light tone she far from felt.

"After I received your letter and heard of your marriage, I was foolish enough to worry. Each wrinkle on my face tells of many heartaches I endured. But I found that if I did not stop I would soon be a veritable witch, as far as looks were concerned, and of course I could not allow that. So I

immediately stopped them by trying to forget all about you and filling my life with new surroundings, new occupations. I took to writing. I found it a safe friend and a silent one. I love my pen, and I grow animated at the sight of a writing pad.''

''If all the women had your will power and control, what a world this would be!'' cried Paul in delight.

''Yes, what a world!'' reiterated Edna. ''Where would be the sweet calms, the sunset hours, the hundreds of other things that go to make life enjoyable. All would be storm and tempest, or a blinding sun that would scorch and burn out our existence. But your wife will be waiting for me. By the way,'' she quietly added, ''we have become great friends, and I tell you truly I would do anything to make her happy. Good-bye, I am going to the drawing-room to get a cup of tea,'' and she left him standing staring at space.

''Jove!'' he mentally exclaimed, ''I wonder if I have made a mistake. I am truly glad they are friends, for now I can propose

to Edna what I feared to before. I want her to remain here as a companion to Meusa, and help her, for she is far the stronger of the two.''

He would not admit he wanted her to remain for his benefit, but he flattered himself he was easing his conscience. For if she remained he could bestow upon her all the comforts and luxuries that she would have enjoyed as his wife, and then in turn he could give Meusa a congenial companion.

He never stopped to think what mischief he was piling up for himself. Wife and former mistress in the same house, and they the best of friends.

If ever Meusa should find out the truth, he flattered himself he could tell her a lie, and she would believe him in preference to the truth from other lips.

After a good bath and rubbing by Zura, Meusa felt all aglow with life and health. She turned to the little Indian saying, ''Zura, what are you thinking of?''

Zura caught her hand, crying, ''Me love you much. Me die for you. Me go to

happy hunting ground. Zura only a poor little Indian girl, but love white lily well. Me know what love is, me love you.''

''Ah, Zura,'' her mistress answered, ''love does not always bring peace and happiness. It more frequently brings sorrow and pain. No, not that gown,'' as Zura brought a beautiful pink, ''bring me one all soft and white, I feel rather angelical just now,'' and after the robe was donned, she truly looked it.

When she went to the drawing-room, she found Ormond sitting by the window with his head thrown back, fast asleep. A feeling came over her to tell him of her love while he slept.

She was always guided by impulse, never by reason, and now she softly glided to his side, knelt by his chair, and poured out the love of her heart to him. Then she rose and printed a zephyr-like kiss upon his curls, only to find herself clasped in his strong arms and to hear the voice she loved best saying:

''Don't struggle, my darling, I have you

now and I mean to hold you until I tell you how much I love you and how dear you are to me. I know you love me, for it was your love that woke me. I dreamed you knelt by my side and told me of your love. I felt you near. I opened my eyes to clasp you in my arms. Oh, Meusa! I know you love me and I you; yet you belong to another and he is my friend. But what is friendship, the world, everything, to a dreary, loveless life. That is what mine will be without you. Meusa, tell me that you love me; let me hear it from your own sweet lips."

She was carried away by the force of his love, and did not realize what she was doing. She nestled closer in his arms, laid her head upon his breast and there told him how she would live and love him alone, and always.

He pressed his hot dry lips to hers, she returning him kiss for kiss. They were lost to every thing but their love. They did not see the curtains slowly part and Edna enter. She looked around. They saw her

too late; Meusa was clasped in his arms, her face flushed with his burning kisses.

Edna, as if reading their thoughts, slowly went to where they sat, and stood still before them.

Ormond was the first to break the painful silence.

"Mrs. Archibald," he quickly said, with a determined look in his eyes, "what you have witnessed was not intended for you to see. But I scorn to act a lie, to tell one. I love Meusa, she loves me. Will you be our friend or betray us?"

Meusa looked with startled, frightened eyes at Ormond as he released her from his arms. She did not move, but her eyes followed Edna as she slowly paced the room.

Edna was grasping the situation. If she befriended Meusa, would she be betraying Paul?

Then she thought of the bright golden days of her own love, and a longing swelled in her heart to help them to a better, brighter life than she had known. She also knew Paul could be happy without Meusa or her

love, and had that day taught her he could be happy with her.

What was the happiness of four lives? Was it not of more importance than the word the world calls honor, but which often, in the sight of heaven, is dishonor? She turned to Ormond and Meusa, saying:

"I am about to do what the world would condemn by being your friend. I will be true to you in all things. I have discovered your secret, but I have suspected it. I will help you carry it to the end, which I hope will be a bright and happy one."

Ormond grasped her hand and hoarsely murmured:

"I thank you, Mrs. Archibald, in the name of Meusa and myself."

Then turning to where Meusa had been standing, he found she had noiselessly left the room.

DREAM SEVENTH.

The Breach Widens.

Meusa sent word by Zura that she was suffering from a bad headache and would not come down to dinner.

Immediately Paul ordered her dinner sent to her, and inquired of Edna if she would not go to her room and spend an hour with her :

"For," he continued, "I am in the midst of a new theory, and feel confident I can succeed in working it out to great advantage; so I cannot go myself to cheer her up. I know her headaches are only little fits of the blues. She don't really know what a headache is."

Ormond listened in silence. When Edna rose from dinner to go to Meusa, Ormond opened the door for her and whispered: "Shall I come? Dare I?"

Edna answered, "No; wait." She found Meusa looking anything but ill. Her face

was flushed, and there was a strange happy light in her eyes that Edna had never seen there before.

She greeted Edna's entrance by exclaiming:

"Oh, Edna, please don't say I am wicked. I could not help it. I love him so. Life seems to me so bright and fair now. Paul never talked to me as Ormond did. I don't believe he could."

Then across Edna's mind floated visions of the past, when Paul had spoken such loving, passionate words to her, that it now made her face burn to think of them. Now he was a barrier to his own wife's happiness, just as another was to his.

"Don't get excited, Meusa dear. I shall not call you hard names or think unkind thoughts of you. You are only a beautiful woman that God made to love and be loved. I came to have a quiet chat with you. We may yet find a way out of this tangle that will mean happiness for you."

Now let me ask you a few questions, and remember I want truthful answers:

"Do you truly love Mr. Radnor? Are you sure?"

"Just as sure as I am that I live," Meusa answered passionately.

"Are you prepared to make any sacrifice that may be demanded of you?" Edna continued.

"I think I could," Meusa hesitatingly answered. "I could brave much for him. Yes," she continued, brightening, "I could go to Paul and ask him to give me up. Wouldn't that be all?"

"Most certainly not," cried Edna. "You must not do that, for you would ruin everything."

"What else can I do?" plaintively inquired Meusa. "I can never be happy without Ormond, and yet how can I be happy with him unless I tell Paul?"

Edna smiled. This queenly-looking woman was such a child at heart.

"Now listen to me," she said; "you might—mind I say might—love Ormond and be happy and Paul never know of it. He would go on in blissful ignorance of it and be

happy, just as he is now, with his books and theories."

There was a look of horror on Meusa's face as she cried:

"Oh, Edna! how can you. That would be wicked. That would be betraying Paul shamefully. I could never divide my affections between two men. I must belong to one, and him alone. I could never do that."

"I only said you could. I did not say you should," slowly answered Edna. "I mean to try to help you, but have you stopped to think what Ormond must suffer if he truly loves you?"

"But," persisted Meusa, "think of me. I don't see that I should sacrifice everything and he nothing, do you?"

"No, but that seems to be the lot of woman. Sacrifice all, give all, and quite often receive nothing but heartaches in return. But I don't mean that shall be your fate," she cried, brightening; "I shall try to aid you to be truly happy, and that with a clear conscience. If Paul came to you and told you he did not love you, but for the

sake of his name the world must be deceived, what would you do?''

''Do?'' joyfully answered Meusa, ''I would give him back his freedom and make him happy. Then fly to my love and be at rest.''

''But you don't understand, Meusa. You would not be free in the eyes of the world, or God either.''

''Oh, yes I would. If God is the all-wise One they say He is, He knows there has been a sinful mistake made, and when He knows I love Ormond, not Paul, He will free me, and that freedom is enough for me. I could be happy with a clear conscience and a warm soul. Oh, Edna,'' she continued, ''don't you think Paul can be made to see the truth? I am nothing more to him than a plaything, a toy. He can easily give me up.''

''Yes,'' dreamily answered Edna, ''but the point is, will he. That remains to be seen. That is what we must wait and work for. Now, Meusa, you must try and help me. Are you willing to work and wait very patiently, if it needs be?''

"Yes, oh yes," eagerly replied Meusa Then a smile curved her sweet lips as she cried, "Here am I trying to get my husband to tell me he does not love me. To make him give me up, while I dare say there are women who languish for that very love that I am so anxious to throw away. There must be some one in the world who could love him and be loved by him."

Edna turned her head so Meusa could not see the pitiful quivering of her mouth and the pallor of her face. When she had controlled herself she said:

"Then it is settled. But in the meantime, what of Ormond? He asked me to-night could he come to see you. I knew it was safe as far as Paul was concerned, but I was not sure of you and I answered 'No.' Now, Meusa, look at me and tell me. Can you trust yourself to see him, knowing how much he loves you and you him? He will be wretched away from you, but you must not see him unless you are sure of yourself."

"I am sure of nothing," Meusa answered, "but that I love him, and I forget all when

I am with him but that love. Oh, Edna," she pleaded, "don't keep him away. I cannot bear that; I must see him. I will try, oh so hard, to remember what you have said, only don't keep him away from me. I must see him and love him a little, just a very little," she murmured softly.

"Have your own way," replied Edna; "it may be the best in the end. But remember I have warned you, and I say again watch yourself, be firm, and if you succeed I can see happiness looming for you, not a great distance off. Now good-night, darling; go to bed and dream not of misery and despair, but happiness, heaven and the white angles of peace and love." Edna kissed her reverently, almost motherly, and left the room.

"What makes me love the girl so!" she cried, as she gained her room. "I am a child as far as appearances go compared to her, yet I am the strong one and she nothing more than a child at heart. I should hate, despise her, for she holds that which I would die to have. Yet, poor child, it is no fault

of hers. I will free her," she vehemently cried, "and yet bring happiness to us all. Oh, Paul!" burying her face in her hands, "I want your love; if only a morsel of it I would be content."

The next morning Paul sent for Edna and laid his proposition before her. She was surprised and startled, yet she showed neither. When he had finished she quietly said:

"Tell me truly, Paul, why do you make me this offer?"

He looked at her, and told the lie without a tremor. "It is only on Meusa's account. I know she likes you and would be wretched without you. I have asked you simply for her sake."

Edna looked him full in the eyes, as she answered:

"I will accept for her sake. But if I thought you were trying to make amends for the past, I would rather die than do so. Your money or position is nothing, absolutely nothing, to me now."

"Don't think of such a thing," he lightly

answered. Yet if Edna had been a close observer she might have detected a faint flush on his brow. "We settled that long ago. Let bygones be bygones, and don't forget we are still friends and comrades."

She bowed and quickly left the room, for she was fast losing her self-control, and in the bitterness of her heart she cried aloud, when she gained her room:

"Dear God, give him back to me or teach me how to forget!"

She then locked her door, took up her pen and wrote to forget her pain. When the lunch bell rang she descended the stairs like a new creature.

"Where in the world have you been hiding?" cried Meusa; "I have hunted everywhere for you. Paul dashed off awhile ago with a look on his face I never saw before, and I learned he was going for a long ride. Ormond has gone too, and I don't know where; I believe it is a conspiracy against me," she cried, like a petulant child.

"I have been in my room and in close communion with my love," Edna answered.

"Whatever do you mean!" cried Meusa, with wide open eyes.

Edna smiled as she said, "Well, in plain words, I have been writing."

"But where was your love?"

"My love," Edna answered, "is my pen and paper, and I find sweet comfort in them."

"Well!" Meusa exclaimed; "I think you an enigma. I really thought you had found your lost love and were happy."

"I have found him," solemnly answered Edna, "but he is farther away than ever."

"Do tell me all about it," eagerly cried Meusa.

"Not now; some time I may," Edna answered, rising to go. "If you are not careful, you will be the cause of my committing murder," she gayly cried.

"Good gracious!" cried Meusa, springing to her feet. "What do you mean?"

"I left the heroine of my new novel lying in a dead faint two weeks before I came here, and I have not been able, as yet, to revive her, owing to your monopolizing all

my time. Think of the fearful burden on my conscience if I am not soon able to do so,'' Edna continued, not noticing the interruption.

Meusa dropped in a heap on the floor, and the room rang with her sweet laughter. In the midst of their mirth Ormond entered. This was their first meeting since their mutual confessions of love in the drawing-room. Meusa looked up in embarrassment, but she saw love beaming from his eyes and grew herself at once. After lunch Edna proposed a stroll. They went to the lake and there she declared she was tired and sat down, as she said, to rest and think. The lovers strolled on and were soon lost to sight. Fall was fast approaching and all about lay scattered dying leaves.

''Will that be the fate of our hopes, darling,'' Ormond murmured.

''No, no!'' cried Meusa; ''I could not bear it. Indeed I could not. Since I lost father and mother I have not known what true love was. Paul has been generous and kind, but he never loved me. Oh, Ormond,''

she cried, "I am almost ashamed to tell you how much I do love you."

"You make me the happiest of men," he quickly cried; "I could talk to you for hours and not be able to tell you of half my love, my bright beautiful darling. The first time I saw you I knew you were my mate. You also recognized the truth. I read it in your face. I struggled against it, but I was too weak, too human. It would have been heroic for me to have left at once and tried to forget you, but I could not; I wanted you for my own, to love and hold until I died. If God intended you for me, why should I cast you away, simply because the world has placed barriers in my way. No, Meusa, I cannot, I will not." Then he gathered her to him and kissed her blushing face.

"Ormond," faintly asked Meusa, "do you think it very wrong for us to love one another?"

"I can only let your own ideas of right and wrong decide that question for you," he gravely said.

"But," she pleaded, "God put that love in our hearts, then how can I help loving you, and if He placed it there how can it be wrong?"

Ormond did not answer her, and she continued:

"We have not wronged Paul. I have tried hard," she wistfully said, "to be the same to him."

He clasped her closer to him with a strange look of pain on his face and said:

"No, I have not wronged him in deed, that I can safely say." But to himself he murmured, "In thought, yes. That is almost as bad. I mean to be guided by my natural intuition. Love tells me, and I feel, that I will triumph in the end. So don't worry or think of it," he said, kissing her lips. "You can trust me just as long as you are strong and trust yourself. When you can no longer do that, then I warn you beware of me. Remember, I love you with a mad, passionate love that must win or die."

"Meusa," Edna called, "where in the

world are you? How long you have been. I have planned out my next three chapters in your absence. I began to think you were lost, and I came to find you. And," she continued, ignoring their flushed faces, "I am sure it will storm. See how the sky is overcast, and the wind has risen and is tossing the poor dead leaves about without mercy."

Then she thought of Paul out in the storm among the mountains. They quickly walked to the house and the storm soon broke in all its fury. The thunder rolled and echoed among the rocks in deafening roars. The lightning lit up the darkened heavens, playing hide-and-seek among the inky clouds. Edna sat in one corner, a frightened heap, all the time thinking of Paul alone in the mountains.

Dinner was served, yet he had not come. Meusa was too happy with Ormond to think of anything but that happiness. But after a time she noticed Edna and cried:

"How quiet you are, you look worried, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," replied Edna, "only I have been thinking how dreadful it must be to be exposed to the fury of such a storm."

"Why, I declare," cried Meusa; "I am so thoughtless. Paul is somewhere, but I know he will stop in some miner's cabin and wait until it is over," and she dismissed him from her mind.

Ormond entered with a letter in his hand. "What do you think," he cried; "I have news from England; a rich uncle of mine has died and left me all he possessed, which is a handsome estate and a large rent roll."

"And, of course," smiled Edna, "the title is with the estate?"

"Yes," he cried, "I am now Lord Ormond Radnor. I knew there was such a relative of mine in England, but I did not dream I would be heir to all his worldly goods."

"What a lucky fellow you are," warmly cried Edna; "I do indeed congratulate you."

But Meusa looked at him with frightened eyes and sobbed:

"Oh, Ormond! He had no business to die and leave you his miserable money. You won't go away from me, will you?"

"That is just it," he slowly replied; "I must leave you for a time, and at once. The business won't wait. I think I shall go as soon as possible. The sooner I go the sooner I will return."

Meusa looked at him and threw herself on a couch, sobbing like a child. Ormond went to her, knelt down, and whispered words of comfort in her ear. Edna quietly left them alone in their happiness and grief. She could not but think that fate played strange tricks sometimes.

"Don't cry, darling," Ormond said, "I won't be gone long. Perhaps when I return there will be a road to freedom for us. Then I can take you to England, to my home, as my wife, my heart's idol."

"I cannot bear the thought of losing you even for a short time," she sobbed. "Oh, please write and tell them you don't want their money and title; that you want to stay with me."

"I cannot do that," he answered, a smile curving his lips. "Listen to me. When the time comes that I can claim you as my wife I want all the luxuries and comforts that wealth can give to place at your feet."

"But," sobbed persistent Meusa, with quivering lips, "I know Paul will do something terrible while you are away. He may carry me off."

"Never fear, he cried; "if he does, love will tell me where you are and I will rescue you."

"Well, if he don't carry me off, I will be so miserable; I am sure I will tell him everything," she cried, putting her soft white arms about his neck. "Now say you won't go, please."

"Meusa," Ormond sternly said, "you must not do that. It would be worse than madness. I shall not leave you until you promise me you won't, and seal your promise with a kiss."

"I will kiss you first," she cried, drying her eyes on her handsome lace bertha; "then I will promise after."

They forgot the coming parting in the knowledge that they were together. The clock in the hall chimed out the midnight hour. Meusa started up, crying:

"So late? What if Paul had found us here?" She kissed him and hurriedly left the room.

Ormond sat where she left him in blissful reverie. The curtains parted, a small dark figure stole into the room, and he recognized Edna. He was about to speak to her when he heard her murmur:

"Oh Paul, Paul, what has happened to you? Are you safe, or lying on the mountain path bruised, and perhaps dead?" Then she crouched down by the window and remained silent.

Ormond did not speak to her, for he realized if there was a secret he was not to know it, and he noiselessly left the room.

One o'clock struck. Still she silently sat by the window, waiting apparently for some one.

Two o'clock chimed forth, and it seemed to her she must fly away. Then her strained

ears caught the clatter or a horse's hoofs. She listened as it came nearer.

When the sound came closer she knew it was Paul, and arising, looked out into the night. The storm had spent its fury. The wind had died away, leaving the earth damp and cold. The moon was slowly coming up, casting her pale silvery light around. She saw Paul dismount, and before he had time to ring, she opened the door for him.

He stood still in amazement at the sight. There she stood, her face all white and drawn, and her hair looking inky black in contrast.

"Why Edna, my dear," he involuntarily cried; why are you up this time of night?"

"Meusa thought you would not be home, so she bade George lock the house and not wait for you. I rather expected you, and I thought you might be wet and cold, and it would be unpleasant for you to have to ring the servants up. So I remained in the drawing-room and watched for you."

He looked at her and exclaimed, "Why

little girl, you have been crying; what is the matter?''

''The storm made me nervous, that is all,'' she wearily answered; ''don't wait, Paul,'' she cried, and in spite of herself, a tenderness crept into her voice. ''Your clothing is wet. Go change it at once. I fear you may take cold. Good-night,'' she softly said, and vanished up the stairs.

''Good-night, little woman,'' he called, ''and thank you.''

When the patter of her slippered feet had died away he muttered:

''I wonder if I made a mistake after all. I wonder if I did!''

DREAM EIGHTH.

An Unexpected Return.

"Edna, let me in," Meusa called; "I want to talk with you." Then she heard some one slowly cross the room to the door, turn the key, and there stood Edna with her face pale and drawn, her eyes and nose red from weeping.

"What is the matter?" Meusa cried, in a sweet sympathetic voice. "You have been crying. Don't deny it."

"Yes, Meusa," Edna tremulously answered; "I have been crying, and I am oh, so wretched. I came to my room immediately after dinner and attempted to write, thinking I would forget my misery. But the longer I wrote, the more hopeless everything appeared to me. Then I laid my poor tired head down and cried."

"I am so very sorry," Meusa answered gently, drawing Edna to her. "I never saw you in tears before. What is the trouble? Couldn't you confide in me?"

"It would do no good," Edna answered in a despairing voice. "You would be powerless to assist me."

"But, Edna, you know I promised to aid you in bringing back your lost love to you. You have been here more than one year and a half, yet I have done nothing toward it. How kind you have been, no one but myself knows," and her eyes filled with tears. "What would have become of me in Ormond's absence if you had not been such a comfort to me. When will he come?" she passionately cried, forgetting all but her own misery, "why don't he know how much I miss him?"

"He will soon be home now," Edna listlessly answered; "then I trust all will be changed. I think that Paul should know the truth. Ormond feared that you might tell it in his absence, and he wants to be near you when the blow falls. He is wise enough to know and see that the truth must be known sometime, and it is far better for Paul to hear it direct from him than another. Then the crisis will come, and that

will mean either happiness or misery for us all, and somehow to-night," she continued with a shudder, "I fear it will be the latter."

"Never mind, dearest," cried Meusa, "I commenced to talk of your happiness, and like the selfish creature I am I forgot it at the first thought of myself. I cannot bear the idea of your being miserable and I happy in the knowledge of my love. How unselfish you have been. You have done everything for me, and not a single thing to promote your own happiness. Have you found out anything about the wife of the man you love? Whether she loves her husband or not?"

"I have discovered," Edna slowly said, "that she does not love him and that she loves another."

There was a peculiar look on Meusa's face, and she tried hard to control her voice to calmness, as she answered:

"Why then don't you try to win him back?"

Edna gave her a searching look, but made no reply.

Suddenly Meusa grasped her friend's hand, exclaiming:

"There, I won't torment you longer, but will tell you what I have discovered."

Edna started to her feet, growing very white.

Meusa gently pushed her in her chair, murmuring soothingly:

"Don't, for goodness sake, get excited and faint, when I tell you I know that Paul, my husband, is the man you love and was your promised husband. I overheard your conversation in the drawing-room, and I must say I was horror stricken. I never loved Paul as a wife should, but I did not imagine him the black-hearted wretch that I had pictured to myself, who so basely deceived you. I believe," she vehemently said, "I can positively hate him now."

"Don't," Edna cried; "I know all the truth, and it is even blacker than you imagined. Yet I love him, for I am so weak, so wretched," she cried, throwing herself at Meusa's feet.

"Don't kneel to me," Meusa gently cried,

raising her tenderly. "I think heaven sent you to comfort me, and to help Paul right his direful wrong. He is engrossed with himself now, but believe me, Edna, the time is not far off when his eyes will be opened, and he will love you enough to make up for the hours of misery he has caused you. I was all last night and to-day making up my mind about you and Paul. This is the whole matter in a nut-shell: I have a husband who should belong to you; but the world has given him to me, and I am ungrateful enough not to want him, because I love some one else. You, in turn, love my husband, but think he does not love you. You should hate him, but you don't, so you must be made happy. I have devised a plan. I think if Paul understood all he would be reasonable, but our hands are tied until Ormond's return, and I do not expect him before the holidays."

Edna turned to her friend and companion, crying, "Do you not hate and despise me?"

"No," vehemently answered Meusa; "I

love you and will assist you in any manner that I can."

"But many a woman in your place, dear," Edna continued, "would brand me a traitoress and try to punish me as, perhaps, I deserve."

"I suppose I would do that very thing," Meusa smilingly answered, "if it was Ormond you loved in place of Paul, or if I loved Paul, not Ormond. You know it is not in many women to help a rival win the man she loves, but in this case I am no heroine. I don't make the smallest sacrifice. I am merely giving you something I don't wish to possess. Come to think of it," she quickly cried, "Paul must certainly be unlike most men to have dared to place us under the same roof and know we were friends. He must possess an undue amount of nerve or audacity, or perhaps both."

"I think he is careless," Edna replied. "He eased his conscience by helping me financially, and I think he really thought I would be a help to you. His books and hobbies keep his eyes closed to his sur-

roundings, but his awakening will not be a dreamy nor a happy one, but horribly realistic.

"Now, Edna, look here," commanded Meusa; "I won't have you a bird of ill omen. I mean we shall all be happy. Paul is the only obstacle in the way and must be brought to terms; he will then be just as happy as the rest of us. Just think of it," she cried, throwing her head back and enjoying her speech, "Ormond and I will visit you and Paul on Christmas, then you and Paul will help us usher in the new year. We will be a sort of happy family; rare thing nowdays. There, that is right," as Edna joined in the laughter.

"I want you to banish that funeral look from your face. I declare I am happier to-night than I have been for some time. I have often lain awake and meditated eloping with Ormond. Then the thought of Paul all alone, with no one to look after him, for you know he gets so lost in his books he needs some one to find him occasionally, would make my heart condemn me for

thinking of such a thing. Now he is off my hands, for he can be far happier with you than he ever could be with me ; I shall tell Ormond when I see him that I will do anything he wishes. I'll run away, tell Paul all, or not tell him, or, even better, do just as I please," and she danced around the room like a pleased child.

"Don't be too sure of happiness," Edna said ; "the end is not yet. But you haven't told me how you learned my secret."

"I accidentally overheard your conversation in the drawing-room. I was standing at the window back of the curtains, and before I could make my presence known I overheard things that I thought would embarrass you both if you knew I had a knowledge of them. So I remained silent, and from what was said I am convinced that Paul loves you better, much better, than any one else. But he is so set in his ways and lost in his thoughts that he either cannot see or will not. I dare say he is proud of me, as he is of a fine horse, but there it ends. Intellectually you are his mate, and

his intellect is the greatest part of him. When you get him all to yourself, you can no doubt bring him down to earthly things at times. That is more than I can do."

"Perhaps you don't try," Edna remonstrated.

"No, I don't. I have sense enough to know when I am well off and to let well enough alone."

There was a rap at the door. It opened and Ormond stood smiling at them. Meusa uttered a cry of delight and flew to his arms half sobbing with joy. He pressed her to his wildly beating heart, and all the world grew fair to him.

"Meusa, my love, my love," he murmured. Then turning to Edna he cried, "Mrs. Archibald, how glad I am to see you. What silly children you must think us. But you know love is impetuous, sometimes bold, and will inflict others with its presence."

"There is nothing," Edna replied, with tears in her eyes, "that brings me more pleasure than to see others happy."

They gathered about the open grate, and Ormond told them of his journey and success. Then a golden silence fell upon them, broken only by the ticking of the clock. Meusa's hand was clasped tightly in that of Ormond's, and she was too happy for words. She looked up as if a thought had occurred to her and cried:

"Edna, can I tell Ormond?"

Edna apparently understood her for she answered simply:

"Yes."

Then Meusa told him Edna's story. How she had suffered and been basely deceived. "And," she added, "we mean to compel him to love her yet, to atone for all the heartaches he has caused her. Every sorrow caused he must repay with numberless days of happiness."

"Yes," firmly answered Ormond, "we will find him and force him to see what he has done, what he has lost."

"Oh, you needn't look far," calmly answered Meusa. "We have found him. He is quite near." Then she cried, look-

ing at Ormond with a very superior smile, "Don't look at me so silly, please; you make me laugh. What I say is the truth. The man that Edna loves is none other than my husband, Paul."

"My God! Meusa; are you mad?" Ormond cried in intense excitement. "Speak Edna—Mrs. Archibald, is she jesting?"

"She is telling you the truth," Edna replied, with downcast eyes.

Then, in the midst of his great surprise, it dawned upon Ormond what that knowledge might mean to him and for him.

"Pardon the question," he said, "but may I ask if Paul still loves you?"

"Yes," quickly answered Meusa; "he loves her as much as such an old bookworm can love any one. I know he does, but Edna thinks he cares more for me. Absurd, isn't it?"

"No," smilingly Ormond replied; "I love you. Is that fact absurd?"

"Oh, that is quite different," she naively answered; "I love you and I couldn't possibly be absurd."

"Have you seen Paul?" Edna asked.

"No," he answered; "I found the hall door unfastened and walked in. Finding no one, I made bold enough to come to your room."

Meusa walked to the window and looked out upon the night.

"We shall have a white Christmas," she cried; "I am so glad."

"Meusa, dear, don't think me rude, but I must send you away now. I feel unusually worn out to-night, and Mr. Radnor must be wearied also."

Meusa turned and caught her breath with a little sob, saying:

"Oh, Edna, don't send me away so soon."

Edna looked at Ormond, and his eyes reiterated her appeal.

"But, my dear, Paul will miss you and come in search of you. And," she hesitatingly said, "he might be vexed at Ormond not coming first to him."

"I will go tell Zura I mean to sleep with you to-night. I have often done the same."

"Yes," Edna answered; "but—"

Meusa had left the room. She quickly returned, saying:

"Now, you dear, you wouldn't be so inhospitable as to turn me out," and she looked at Ormond with a little satisfied laugh. "I know you won't mind if I talk with Ormond just a little. You know," she continued, "I have much to say to him."

"I will grant your request," Edna smilingly said; "but you will have to excuse me." I must lie down and rest."

"Do so," sweetly cried Meusa; "we will try and not disturb you."

Edna rose to go to her sleeping-room, but before entering she turned to Meusa, saying:

"Don't keep Mr. Radnor too long. Remember he is tired and needs rest."

Then her eyes turned to Ormond and he read, "Remember I trust you."

Paul sat in his study long after the clock chimed the hour of one. Putting down his book with a weary sigh he dreamily ascended the stairs. He went straight to Meusa's

room to bid her good-night, as had always been his custom since she was a little child. He found Zura half asleep, but no Meusa. Zura sleepily gave him the message, then took herself off to her own comfortable bed. Paul went to Edna's door, and gently tapping on it, called, "Meusa, Meusa, are you asleep? Don't disturb yourself. I only want to say good-night and pleasant dreams."

"Good-night," he heard her answer, then all was still.

When Paul was disrobing for the night the bell in the hall rang furiously and long. He threw on his dressing robe and hastened to the door, wondering who could be there at that time.

He opened it to hear Ormond cry:

"Hello, old boy! I am glad to be home again."

Paul grasped the extended hand in hearty welcome, and as they ascended the stairs, said:

"I am afraid you will find a cold room waiting for you. Come and share mine. Meusa is with Mrs. Archibald to-night, so

we won't keep her awake. Sorry you can't see her. If it wasn't so dreadfully late I would call her. But only a few minutes since I called good-night to her through the door, and I knew by her voice she was almost asleep.

Ormond protested that he did not mind a cold room, and that he rather liked it; but Paul, on hospitable thoughts intent, would not listen, and took him to his own room and bade him be comfortable.

Paul was soon in bed and fast asleep. Ormond walked the floor, his face flushed and a determined look upon his handsome manly face. Then he undressed, threw himself on the bed, inwardly crying:

"Pshaw, what a fool I am. All is fair in love and war, and she loves me."

But the morning broke clear and cold before sleep visited his tired eyes and lulled his brain into forgetfulness.

DREAM NINTH.

Suspicion Awakened.

The day was far spent. The hills and trees were covered with snow. It was the week preceding Christmas, and by the way nature lavished upon the earth her robe of white, a right royal Christmas it would be.

"Look," cried Edna, "there is a beautiful stag almost at the door. What a splendid creature he is."

Paul joined her at the window, and they stood looking in silent admiration.

"See how afraid, how timid he is," she whispered. "Why did he venture so near."

"Hunger, I suppose, forced him here," Paul answered; "then, again, he may have accidentally strayed near. Do you know," he savagely cried, "should any one harm him I would feel like killing them."

"Why, Paul, how savage you are," Edna cried in surprise.

"Yes, I feel so," he shortly answered,

"I love to take my gun and dogs and hunt the deer in the forests and mountains, for there I meet him on his own level, and the most subtle of the two wins. That is a fair fight. But this unprotected thing comes to me, and says as plainly as he can, 'I fear you. Hunger has driven me here; have mercy.'"

"Don't you think your ideas are a little strained?" Edna softly asked. "Don't you remember the scene between the snake and the dove? You described it most vividly to me. To my mind, that was cruel (in a manner)," she quickly said, noting the frown on his dark handsome face. "But to you, I presume it was just as it should be. Now, if I were a hunter and sportsman, I don't believe I could resist the temptation of bagging such game. My better self would be lost in the excitement of the moment."

While she spoke a shot rang out upon the air and the stag bounded to his feet, then fell without a groan.

Paul, with a curse on his lips, left the room quickly, followed by Edna. They

rushed down the wide stone steps, stopping suddenly at the sight that met their view.

There stood Meusa with a still smoking rifle in her hands. Her face was flushed and her eyes were dancing with excitement. How beautiful she looked. Her short velvet jacket fitted to perfection her faultless figure, and on her golden curls was perched a jaunty velvet cap that made her face look very childish and sweet. At her side stood Ormond, no less excited than she.

He was saying, "Bravo; good shot my Lady Meusa."

Then seeing Paul, he cried, "Don't you think her selfish, taking all the honor away from poor me. Think what a mighty deed that little hand has accomplished."

Then for the first time he noticed Paul's face. It was white to the very lips.

"Why old fellow," Ormond cried, "are you ill or frightened? We are all right."

Paul was trying to control himself before replying. When he did so he ignored Ormond, and turning to Meusa he harshly asked:

"Why have you done this?"

His voice was hoarse with passion and a dangerous look was in his eyes, a look that she had often noticed when they were children.

She cast a startled glance at Ormond, then looking at Paul, answered:

"Why, because you taught me how to handle a gun. You told me thrilling huntsmen's stories and created in me a huntsman's desire. I killed the stag because I thought it would please you, and—and—" desperately, "because I wanted to."

"Please me," he sneered, losing what little control he had mustered up; "I did not know that I had ever taught you to kill the helpless and trusting."

"I don't understand you," Meusa answered in bewilderment; "Ormond and I went out for a walk after lunch. We tracked the stag to this place. I, of course, was wild to bring him down with my own hands; the opportunity came, and I did what I thought would please you—fired and killed him."

Paul turned to Ormond and said bitterly:

"So you are to blame, too. I am grieved. I did not think my cousin, one of my own blood, would prove himself a miserable coward."

What!" cried Ormond; "Paul how dare you?"

"Oh, Ormond," cried Meusa in alarm. "Don't quarrel; please don't. Let us first know what it is about. Paul, for the love of heaven, tell me what you mean?"

She stood between the two enraged men like an angel of peace. The wind had blown her cap off and was kissing her soft hair as if trying to comfort her.

"I can tell you in a few words," Paul replied. "According to my ideas of right and wrong that stag should not have been killed; he was trusting and helpless."

"He wasn't helpless," corrected Meusa; "he could have run away."

"Silence!" commanded Paul, using the insolent domineering tone he so often did when she was a child. "I say he was help-

less; he was perhaps driven here by hunger, and that alone should have placed him above harm. I had hoped that you took to heart my teachings enough to know right from wrong."

"No, I have not," cried Meusa, now thoroughly angry, but glad his anger fell on her and not upon her lover. "That is where you have failed."

"Why have I failed," reiterated Paul, his self pride thoroughly aroused; "it was not due to my teachings."

"No," scornfully answered Meusa; "it was due to self love and pride and from a domineering spirit. As a little child you coerced and frightened me, but I am now a woman and quite capable of discerning right from wrong without your aid."

She turned and left him, her head high and her step haughty and firm, like an insulted princess.

Both men watched her until she disappeared up the long flight of steps. Then Paul turned to Ormond, saying:

"Ormond Radnor, I am very sorry this

has occurred; not more for the slain stag than for you."

"You need not waste your pity on me," Ormond quickly replied, as he carelessly leaned upon the rifle which Meusa had dropped. "Don't trouble yourself; I am all right."

"Don't be too sure," Paul hotly answered, with an angry twitching of the lips. "A man who would aid in killing a helpless animal, might, and I have no doubt would, do worse. He might, had he the opportunity, steal another man's wife."

Ormond recoiled as if Paul had struck him, but he realized, above his anger, that Meusa must be the first consideration. Yet he could not resist the temptation to say:

"Come, don't let us quarrel like school boys. I don't blame you for judging me so harshly, for you no doubt judge me by yourself. But of course," he more gravely added, "after what has occurred I cannot remain here." Then he determined upon a bold stroke and lightly said, "If I did, I might steal your wife. Think of it!"

Paul forgot all anger in his astonishment. He looked at Ormond in a helpless way, and cried:

"God bless me, Ormond, I did not mean that. Why such a thought never entered my head. I only used that as a figure of speech. I know Meusa don't love me; she is such a child she can't love any one. I am content to have it so. Love seldom brings happiness in this world. When you are in love, you are either upon the mountain top, soaring to heaven, or down in the valley, exploring hell. When I think of Meusa in love, the very thought makes me smile."

Ormond breathed freer, now that he knew Paul's shot had been a random one. He stood in silence thinking what would be the best course for him to pursue, when Paul aroused him by saying:

"Now, Ormond, forget what has happened. I don't want you to go away; the place would be lonely without you, and I am sure Meusa would miss you greatly. Pardon my hot words, shake hands and let us be friends."

Ormond grasped the proffered hand, exclaiming:

"You need not apologize to me. I think I understand that better than you do."

Edna was waiting in the hall in horrible suspense, and when the two men entered, pleasantly chatting, she looked at them in wonder.

Ormond passed her by and did not appear to notice her presence, but Paul stopped and addressed her in a manner that made her heart beat with a gladness that almost overpowered her.

"You never knew I had such a beastly temper, did you? In the old happy days you never saw anything of me but the best."

There was something in her face that made him forget he was a proud self-willed man. In that moment he forgot even Meusa and that he was married. He stooped and kissed her upturned face. Then as if, when his lips touched hers, it reminded him of many things, he quickly cried:

"Forgive me; both the reminder of the

past and the kiss. Believe me, I did not mean to hurt or wound you, but your face looked so childish and grieved. Yet I saw joy in it, too. I kissed you as I would any grieved child. Forget it and try to be happy."

He strode up the stairs with his thoughts far from his books and hobbies.

"Hang it all," he muttered, "what made me such a fool? I believe I am growing silly in my old days, but I can't rid myself of the thought that somehow I have made a mistake."

He thought of these two women as pieces of handsome furniture. He had the choice of either, but after making that choice he kept reproaching himself for not taking the one he left. It did not matter to him that he did not love them. It was all sufficient for him to know he possessed them. Meusa, he was proud of; she she was so stately and beautiful. He swelled with inward pride when he exhibited her to the world as one of his possessions; but she never appealed to his better self, as Edna did.

When with Edna he felt a calm, sweet feeling, as if at peace with the world and nimself. And that to Paul meant much. To be at peace with himself was unusual; his was one of those peculiar natures that seldom know inward peace. He really loved Edna, but he would not open his eyes to the fact, or admit even to himself he was wrong.

Going to his study he calmly reviewed the events of the day. The killing of that stag lay heavily on his mind, and he could not cease thinking about it. Then he fell to thinking of Ormond, and somehow, whenever he did so, Meusa would rise up before him as if inseparable from him.

"How foolish I have grown," he cried. "Here I am staring at space while my books lie idle and neglected." He picked up one that had kept him interested for hours upon the day previous, yet it had no attraction for him now, and casting it aside he abruptly left the room.

He went to Meusa's door and gently tapped. After some delay, Meusa opened it. She was still wearing her street jacket

and her face was red with weeping; her hair had fallen down, and hung in a waving mass of gold down her back.

"Why, Meusa," he cried, "what a sight you are. Take off your jacket at once," he commanded; "then stop crying, and tell me, what in the world is the matter. I came to tell you I am not half as angry as I really ought to be. You were, in my judgment, very wrong, but magnanimously I forgave you. Had I known you were here alone, grieving, I would have come to you at once."

The only reply she made was to throw herself upon a soft cushioned chair and sob aloud. He went to her, for she appeared so genuinely distressed, and said in a coaxing tone:

"Won't you stop crying and forgive me?"

"Of course I forgive you," she sobbed; "it isn't that. I am not crying because you have been hateful to me; I am used to that."

"What then," he gravely inquired, "are you crying for?" Her pathetic, 'I am used to that,' hurt him.

"Oh," she sobbed, "I am nervous."

"Let me get you some wine," he cried, feeling very guilty, indeed. He turned, and saw something bright upon the floor, almost at his feet. He picked it up. It was the top of a gentleman's cuff button, and he remembered seeing it on Ormond.

"How did this get here?" he cried, in genuine astonishment.

Meusa started to her feet, her face growing red with embarrassment. Then the telltale flush died away, leaving her pale and frightened, but she gathered herself together with an effort, and said:

"As I came up the stairs I found it, and I accidentally let it fall on entering the room, and forgot all about it."

"Strange," Paul answered, looking fixedly at her; "I noticed Ormond's cuff buttons, as he leaned on his rifle after you left us, and I could swear he had them both then; and, of course, you came up the stairs before he did. Now, Meusa, are you quite sure you are telling me the truth?"

"No—I mean—oh, go away, Paul," cried Meusa, in a helpless voice. "I don't know

what I am saying. You know extremely nervous people never do.'

"But you are not nervous," he calmly answered; "you are only trying to hide something from me. I know you are."

"Paul," she cried in desperation, "how cruel you are. You will torment me until I have nervous prostration and die. Then what will you do?"

"Have consolation in knowing you died with a fashionable disease, and not only lived up to the times, but died with the latest whim in your possession." Paul answered with a light laugh.

Meusa knew he was forcing a gayety he did not feel, for the look was on his face she dreaded most to see when she was a child.

"There, little woman, don't worry," he cried, noting her drooping face; "I won't tease you any more. Take a nap before dinner, if only forty winks; it will do you good," and he left the room.

Meusa waited until she heard Paul's study door shut with an emphatic bang. Then she went to the curtains that separated her

sleeping-room from her boudoir and softly said:

"Hurry now, he has gone." Ormond appeared very red and apparently uncomfortable. "I think you might have known better," Meusa continued, "than to have dared come in here. I have had such a fright."

Ormond looked at her with reproachful eyes and left the room in silence.

"What strange beings women are," he exclaimed after having gained his own room. "I never dreamed of going to her room, but her door was open and she called me just for a moment. If I had refused she would have been angry, and now she is angry because she had a fright on my account and because I did go in. Queer things women are. I feel somewhat abused. Until you know them, they resemble a box of fire-crackers; likely to go off at the right time, also the wrong."

Paul was holding communion in his study also.

"Strange," he thought, "that this should

be in her room." Then slowly it dawned upon him about Ormond's agitation of the afternoon, and it struck him a terrible blow. "I would show him no mercy," he hissed between his strong white teeth; "absolutely none." In his wounded pride and anger he forgot the time when he stood in the position he suspected Ormond did, and he also failed to remember that he who should have shown him no mercy quietly renounced all for him, and after the sacrifice he basely betrayed both the living and the dead. But this to him was entirely different. He was in a position to feel for that man now, but could he rise up to a level with him when the trial came. Wait and see.

DREAM TENTH.

Wounded Pride.

Why will women trust men when their reason and intuition tell them they will betray that trust in nine cases out of ten, and that at a time when they most need a strong arm to lean upon? Why does the heart rule supreme above all reason and better judgment?

I don't mean to say all men are not true to their word, and think nothing of breaking it under circumstances that ought to be sacred to them.

Those of my readers who have a clear conscience will know within themselves I do not mean them; but those who have done as Paul did will surely find that just what they cause another to suffer that will they also suffer, pang for pang, heartache for heartache. They can then sympathize with, and look back in sorrow and pity upon the life, perhaps lives, they have wrecked, and like Paul will find that the sin they

thought buried will return, and they will be compelled to harbor it, no matter what they otherwise wish.

In Paul's case, that best, in his angry mood, seemed bad indeed. He was shut up in his room fighting the same pain Edna had fought and conquered. He did not love as she had, but his pride made him suffer most bitterly.

"Pshaw," he cried, "I am looking through the glass of wounded pride, and it has magnified the few little facts I have accumulated into high proportions. Meusa would not dare to love without first consulting me." (Oh, egotistical man, how I pity you.) "I have ruled her absolutely in all things, and I have not lost that power yet."

Losing the power of ruling her was of far more importance than the loss of love.

His thoughts drifted to Edna, just as all men's do when they find they have been betrayed. They think of the one they have made suffer, and pity them in the same proportion that their own hearts crave for pity.

Had Meusa confided in Paul he would

have given her up to be happy. He looked upon life in a practical way, and thought it was not worth living if happiness was left out.

He brought his hand down upon the table as he cried:

"What a fool I was not to have known and appreciated Edna and been true to her."

He began to realize he had lost much when he threw her faithful love aside and followed his own self-will and mad caprice. Walking to the window he mused:

"I shall do nothing but watch and wait. 'All things come to him who waits.' I'll wait," and he grimly smiled.

"If I find them guilty, they shall suffer, and after that, what?" he inquired of himself. "She who has suffered and is blameless shall be rewarded if she will accept reward from my hand. I think I could be happy again. Oh, Meusa my child," he groaned, "had you but trusted me and followed out my teachings you would have been spared much. But you did not, and if I find you guilty, I shall not spare you."

Edna's voice aroused him.

"Paul may I come in," she softly said.

"Not now," he cried; "I will see you in the drawing-room."

Then he heard her slowly turn and descend the stairs. For once in his life he made haste and soon joined her. There was a pleased expression on her face when she saw him.

"I did not look for you so soon," she laughingly said. "What has caused such a change?"

"Nothing," he cried; "only that I have turned over a new leaf. Now I am at your service. What can I do for you?"

"I want to ask you to go with me for hollies to-morrow. You know it is Christmas eve, and we want the rooms to look their brightest and best."

"Why not take Ormond?" he carelessly inquired.

"Because I would rather have you," she quietly answered.

He looked at her keenly, but could read nothing in her face.

"I think I can go," he slowly said. Then looking her in the eyes, he cried:

"Edna, are you sure it is hollies you want, and are you quite sure you want me as an escort?"

He half suspected some plot against him; now that his suspicions were aroused, he suspected every one. In a few short hours he was so unlike himself he even distrusted the being he called self.

"Why, what an idea, Paul," she laughingly cried; "don't be frightened, I shant run off with you. I know you too well to do anything so rash."

To her amazement he drew her to him and kissed her hair in his old caressing way. She remained silent, half thinking it was a fancy of her much troubled brain.

"Why, Edna," he reproachfully cried; "you never acted like this before. You haven't returned even one little kiss. In the old days I got them back with interest."

"Yes, that is true," she murmured. "Then you were mine. Now —"

"I belong to another," he quickly said,

gently putting her from him. "Is that what you would say?"

She was standing before him like a grieved child.

"Yes," she gently said, and her voice had a pathetic ring, while her lips quivered painfully. "That is what I mean. You are not only lost to me, but your wife is my friend."

He felt now, when it was too late, that Edna would have been a joy and comfort to him had he but been true. He could have still retained Meusa as much as he now did, for he realized she was nothing to him. Then he might, in time, have given her to some one worthy of her. But he saw his love of ruling, self-conceit and pride had placed him in an unenviable position.

He had trampled Edna's devotion under the iron heel of his own selfish pride, and Meusa, for whom he had done all this, had returned him blow for blow. Now when he thought all he had to do was to ask of the wronged one to trust him, and she would fall into his arms with cries of joy, he found that

she was the stronger of the two, and he was powerless to command.

Meusa had torn down his self-pride and trampled it in the dust, and he turned to the one he had wounded, for comfort, but found it not.

"Edna," he said, in a way peculiar to him, "I think I have made a fool of myself; but never mind that now. Sit down, I want to talk to you. Tell me truly, as a friend of Meusa's, do you think she cares for me as you—pardon me. I mean as a wife should care for her husband?"

Edna realized she was nearing the goal, and the thought made her cautious.

"How can I tell, Paul," she evasively answered. "Even a friend, a true one, cannot read a wife as a husband can. I should think you could answer that for yourself."

"Edna, I believe you are keeping something from me. But never mind, keep your secret, while I tell you what I know. Ormond loves my wife and she is not indifferent to him. Now tell me, what do you think of the news?" he smilingly asked.

"I don't know what to think," she replied on the defensive. "I am too afraid of injuring Meusa to even express my opinion. If I was sure no harm would come to her I might venture to express it, but until I do my lips shall be sealed. I would not injure her, nor would I injure you."

"Injure me," Paul cried; "there is not a woman alive who has the power to injure me, through love. People sometimes make mistakes and regret them. I may have made one myself, but don't bother your head about Meusa and me. The only regret I have is the concealment. If Ormond loves her, let him have her, and had he gone about it in the proper manner he could have had my blessing. But as it is, I fear it will be my curse."

"Oh, Paul," cried Edna, "you surely will not do anything to harm your wife. You would not be so cruel."

"Well," he reflectively answered, "I wouldn't like to, but you know from your own experience that for every moment you spend in heaven you suffer weeks of hell.

Why should some suffer, and others more guilty go free?''

''Paul, Paul,'' Edna cried, sinking on her knees at his feet, ''don't talk so. She is nothing but a child. No matter what she may have done, you shall not harm her.''

''Ah!'' he cried, ''then you admit she has been wrong. My wife, whom I trusted has betrayed me.''

If Edna had been so inclined, she might have flung the truth of his betraying another man's trust at him and silenced him. But she was generous, and uttered no word of blame. She was thoroughly alarmed for Meusa and her only thought was for her happiness.

''You do not know what you say, Paul. You imagine all those things. Your fears may be groundless.''

''No,'' Paul cried, now thoroughly angry; ''do you see this? I found it in her room. How came it there?''

Edna saw in his hand the tell-tale sleeve button, and her heart sank, but she bravely answered:

"Paul, dear, listen; that does not prove her guilty of betraying you. Let us admit she loves him, he her. It is no crime, no sin to love. How can man or woman help or be called accountable for that which they are powerless to prevent. Love is a part of some people; it lives and burns while life lasts. And I think it will burn its way to the hereafter and there live, if in another form. And worst of all it comes unbidden to most of us, and still clings and remains even after it has been insulted and abused. Yes," she brokenly cried, "clings forever."

She buried her face in her little hot hands and sobbed aloud in her distress. He took her hands and very tenderly stroked them, and raising her from her knees, drew her to him, crying:

"Faithful friend, faithful heart, true through it all. No, don't draw away. I am your friend; as such let me comfort you. Stop sobbing and listen to me. Trust me, and tell me what you know about my wife and Ormond. If you confide in me I will promise two things. First, that no harm

shall come to Meusa. Second, I will atone to you for the wrong I have done you.''

He could feel her heart wildly throbbing beneath his hand, as he held her close to him. She tried to speak, but could not. When, at last, recovering herself, she whispered:

''Stoop down, closer, Paul, and listen. I love you. I have continued to love you when I should have hated and despised you; but that I could not do. There was nothing in my heart but love as deep as the restless sea. Next to you I love the woman I should despise. If you do nothing to injure her I will accept your atonement as a priceless gift, but I would lose all that I hold dear upon this earth—and the dearest is yourself—rather than harm one hair of her head. Paul, I leave you to answer. Can I trust you? Will you crush your pride and self will?''

There was silence; Paul's eyes never left her face. At last he regretfully answered:

''Your experience with me should tell

you 'No,' most emphatically. But I can truly say now, while I hold you close to me, I believe I love and care for you more than ever I did, and as much as I can care for any woman. I am fickle, like all men of my stamp; it is not in us to be true and constant. We lack the thing that we read about, that the world raves about, a loving faithful heart. But why blame us? I see some men ready to fall down and worship the object of their love. That, to me, is foolish, and I cannot understand it. I begin to think that it is not that man who is at fault, but I who am lacking. Nature blessed him with a true heart and a loving one, yet through some caprice made me what I am—a man incapable of loving divinely or appreciating that higher, holier love in others. But as I said, such love as I have to give I lay at your feet."

"Oh, Paul, Paul," she cried, "I would rather have you with your poor conception of love than another who would fall down and worship me."

Then as if the awful impossibilities swept

over her faithful head, she cried despairingly:

"Oh, why did you leave me, why forsake me? All might have been so different. Now four lives may be ruined through you."

"That brings us back to the starting point," he gravely answered. "If you think you dare tell me the truth, I will do what I can for the happiness of all."

Then Edna told him of Meusa's love, but she would allow no breath of suspicion to fall upon her, and she finished by saying:

"Now, Paul, I want you to understand that you have not been wronged. Meusa's only sin has been in loving Ormond, and how could she help that. Poor child, she has suffered much, and I know she must have been tempted at times to follow where her heart led. But she resisted, and I know she is worthy of all the praise that I can bestow upon her."

Edna's words and manner were so earnest, so convincing, Paul could not but believe her.

"It does not matter," he quietly said.

"She, no doubt, has betrayed me in thought. To me that is quite as bad, and Ormond, he—," then he suddenly checked himself and quietly finished, "is better than I am, do what he might. One thing more, I must be thoroughly convinced of their love, through nothing I have been told or suspected, but what I see for myself. Then I will take the necessary steps toward happiness for all. At present, Edna, say nothing to Meusa. Wait and trust me," and pressing a hot burning kiss upon her brow he left her saying, "don't forget we go for holly to-morrow at ten o'clock."

DREAM ELEVENTH.

Unconsciously Drifting.

The next morning when Paul awoke, for once in his life, his hobbies and books had a second place in his thoughts. He turned upon his pillow and reviewed his past from the day he first met Edna, and now saw many things clearly that heretofore he had been blind to. Yet he could not analyze himself to his own satisfaction.

There had sprung up in his heart a hate for Ormond which he tried hard to ignore. He knew he had broken as many commandments as Ormond, yet he could not bring himself to forgive the only one that affected him.

To do Paul justice, he tried hard but failed. He seemed determined to give Ormond the just punishment that he himself should have received.

For Meusa he merely felt contempt for her cowardly weakness, in not confessing

to him and trusting to his manliness and generosity to release her.

He called to mind how Edna had acted, and how far superior in all things she was to his wife, and he cursed himself for ever giving her one heartache.

It was his nature never to forgive deceit and concealment, and he was, this morning, not sure of himself, and he felt he would do something that he might regret before he was out of the tangle, the first threads of which were knotted by himself. There was but one thing he was sure of, and was determined upon, and that was that Edna should not suffer another heartache.

"No," he exclaimed aloud, springing out of bed, "she shall not. I will sacrifice everything first. Yet how small I shall feel," he soliloquized. "My pride has been trampled upon, the teachings of years wasted and unheeded, and I am laughed at behind my back."

He looked at the clock, which indicated nine. "How late I have slept," he thought. "I have grown a stranger to myself in the

last few hours." He was changed, all changed, and the change bewildered him.

Paul was an habitual early riser and accustomed to spend the early morning hours in studying and working out his pet theories. Hastily leaving the room, his first act was to go and get Meusa his accustomed morning offering of flowers.

"I will send her a warning by them," he thought. "I will send a bunch of tiger lilies, and if she heeds it not, her unhappiness be upon her own head."

One hour later he found himself in the sleigh, with Edna by his side, looking charming in her soft gray furs. He wrapped the robes carefully around her, then taking the reins in his fur-encased hands, they merrily started amid the jingling of bells and the voice of Meusa crying:

"A merry time, Paul; don't run away with Edna, and remember lots of holly for the wreaths."

Paul looked at his companion who seemed to read his face, for she averted hers and remained silent. The silence was unbroken

save by the grinding noise of the runners, as they flew over the crisp snow, and the merry jingle of the bells.

In the meantime Ormond was as happy as if hate never existed in this world of ours. He suspected nothing, consequently feared nothing. He sauntered to Meusa's boudoir and found her sitting with a bunch of flowers on her lap. There was a troubled look on her usually bright face.

"What is the matter, dear one?" he cried; "what makes you look so troubled?"

"Look!" holding up the flowers, "I was so happy until I came to my room and found these. You know Paul has always sent me a morning offering of flowers ever since he brought me home as his wife. Heretofore they have been lilies and roses—white ones—for he knew how I loved them. When he was displeased with me he would place among them a red rose, and I somehow grew accustomed to read his feelings toward me by the flowers, and you see this morning he has sent me tiger lilies. I fear that means I must beware of something, I know

not what, but fear he suspects or knows of our love."

"Nonsense," Ormond replied, throwing the flowers upon the table and taking her hands, "how should he know? The unlucky finding of that button proves nothing."

"You don't know Paul," Meusa answered; "I am afraid that did open his sleepy eyes. Ugh!" she cried, "what on earth makes me feel as if I was having a shower bath of ice-water?"

"Because you are foolish, and perhaps nervous," he answered. Then as if a thought occurred to him, he cried, "do you think Edna could have betrayed us?"

"Oh, Ormond, how can you?" Meusa reproachfully cried; "I would as soon suspect yourself. She might tell him, though, if she thought it would benefit us. After all, Ormond," running her fingers through his curls, "if Paul did or does know of our love we have never done aught to wrong him. We simply love one another. He can't put us to death, even if he wanted to, for that."

Ormond placed her golden head upon his breast and lovingly smiled as he answered:

"My innocent love, you don't know the world, particularly the men in it. Appearances are all against us. If Edna should tell Paul what she knows she might swear on a thousand Bibles there was no wrong in our love, yet Paul would not believe it, neither would the world. Paul knows nothing of a love that fills the heart and soul, that refines and purifies. He could not love as I love you. The human part of his love would triumph over the higher feelings. I do not say this to blame or censure him. There are many men like him, and I think they do try to be different, but just at the time when they think they have conquered the unexpected happens, and they fall back to the starting point."

Meusa looked at him in a bewildered way, then naively inquired:

"Oh, Ormond! are you then so much better than other men?"

He could not resist smiling, even when her face looked serious and trusting.

"No," he cried; "I have, at times, no better thoughts than they, but I have the will to conquer myself, which they lack. If I had followed my own desires I might have justified anything that I did by telling myself ours was a hopeless love. But I thought of you and conquered. Never mind, darling," he cried, feeling how she trembled, "don't worry. Let us go down to the drawing-room and sing until Paul and Edna return."

"I don't want to sing," Meusa replied, "I want to remain where I am. I want to be with you."

He rose from the stool at her feet and walked to the window, where he remained so long that Meusa at last joined him. She drew his head back and kissed his face. He turned and caught her in his arms, and passionately cried:

"Don't, my dear white dove, don't do that. Come," he almost roughly cried, "you must come out in the garden with me. I will go anywhere with you, but I must not remain here." She looked at him with

frightened, startled eyes. Then before she could make a reply, he released her and strode from the room.

She stood irresolute for a time, not knowing what was best to do. Yet the most important thought to her was that she had in some way offended him. She turned and left the room, slowly making her way to the drawing-room. There she threw herself upon a chair and sobbed out her grief. Here Ormond found her, and told her in gentle, loving words, she had neither offended nor displeased him.

"Then what makes you act so strangely?" she inquired, with tear-filled eyes; "just at the times I fancy you love me most, you abruptly leave me as if I was hateful to you. Oh, why don't we tell Paul all, and go away and be happy?" she finished, with quivering lips.

"It is not the telling Paul," he answered, "that I object to, but I see no way out after he is told. If he should give you to me you would be compelled to go through the divorce court for legal freedom, or I would have it

thrown in my face at every step that I had stolen another man's wife. We cannot set aside the laws of society and the world without bringing condemnation upon our heads."

"I never thought of that," Meusa slowly answered; I thought Paul the only obstacle. I did not think the world had anything to do with our love. I do not love Paul, and I feel that in living with him without love heaven frowns upon me as sinning against myself and it, yet I feel assured it smiles upon our love."

"But you don't seem to understand that sometimes what heaven smiles upon the world frowns at as something low and far beneath it. And most unfortunately we are in the world at the present time."

"Then I would rather be in heaven," she cried; "there I know we would be happy together."

"Alas," he answered, with a ring of bitterness in his tones; "if the meddlesome world would let us alone we could find our heaven here."

He stooped and kissed her, as Paul's voice

said, "Meusa, here is your holly. We have brought you enough to make you a green Christmas, at least inside."

There Paul stood looking at them, and like the guilty things they knew themselves to be they remained silent, waiting for the blow they felt sure would fall.

Meusa was very pale, and Ormond stood looking at Paul with defiance in his eyes. Paul looked as if enjoying the silence, then, to their astonishment, he burst into a ringing laugh, and cried:

"For goodness sake, what are you staring at. Come along. The lunch bell has rung and I am famished," and he left them, to join Edna in the hall, and together they went to the dining-room.

Meusa looked at Ormond, and whispered in a frightened voice, "What shall we do now?"

"Nothing," he replied, "let us be guided by him. Let him take the first step. Come; we will join them at lunch," and he kissed her white lips, "to put a little color in them," he laughingly said. "Don't look so fright-

ened, my dear. No matter what comes, I will remain by your side.''

Paul was so gay and unlike his glum, thoughtful self, Meusa began to hope he had not seen that fatal kiss after all. Edna was silent, but very happy. Her heart was at rest. She knew Paul's feelings for her, but she wondered if all would come out unhurt in the mad game that love was playing with them.

She half suspected Paul, as far as Meusa was concerned, but her gloomy thoughts were soon dispelled by going to the drawing-room and making wreaths, and festooning the rooms until they looked like forerunners of Christmas indeed.

Paul willingly resigned his books for the afternoon to help make a merry Christmas. The bells were ringing out the advent of Christmas morn ere they separated for the night. Their greetings were quickly followed by good-nights, and soon the house was silent on this Christmas morn which should bring to them and all the world, ''Peace on earth good will to men.''

DREAM TWELFTH.

Brave Through Fear.

Meusa was lying on a couch in her handsome boudoir, looking the personification of contentment and happiness. Paul had appeared so contented and happy, and acted so like a jolly school-boy, that what suspicions she had were lulled to rest. She had rid herself of the strange forebodings that she had confided to Ormond. In her heart she knew she was innocent of all wrong. She was interrupted by Zura bursting into the room in a wild, frightened way, saying:

"Me think Master Paul bad spirit. Him charm big snake. No 'fraid of nothing. Ugh! Ugh!" and she turned to her mistress as if for protection.

"Why, Zura," Meusa cried in astonishment, "what are you talking about? What has master done?"

"Big heaps. Him big medicine man. Zura go down to flower-house to get flowers for you. Me go easy; 'fraid of big snake;

open door soft like and creep in. Then me hear noise, hiss, hiss. Me see Master Paul standing by Wild Rose (Edna) and on floor lay big snake. It stick its tongue out and slowly crawled to where they stand. Zura no go way; me so 'fraid. Wild Rose was pale. White Master had her hand, and me hear him say, 'Be calm, don't get nervous.' Snake creep nearer and nearer. Zura sure it swallow them both. Me shut eyes, me so 'fraid; me open them again quick and see snake crawl in the air and nothing to crawl on. Snake's head was above White Master's. They no move. Then White Master raise his eyes to snake and it stop still, then fall in big heap on floor like dead. Me say him bad spirit. Him big medicine man, and Zura much 'fraid him hurt you.''

Meusa listened in silence to this marvelous, incoherent tale. When Zura had finished she said, gently:

''Zura, I hope you haven't been drinking Master Paul's fire-water?''

''No! no!'' Zura earnestly replied; ''me no touch fire-water; me hate it; makes

Zura's head ache. Me see all me tell without fire-water."

"It seems scarcely possible, this tale," her mistress answered. "If you truly saw it, I suppose I must believe you. Ah, here comes Mrs. Archibald," as Edna entered. "Why how pale you are," Meusa cried, going to meet her. "Do sit down and tell me what has happened. Zura has been telling me of yourself, Paul and that awful snake, and a lot of things that I cannot understand."

"Oh, Meusa," Edna cried, "I have had such a dreadful experience." Then she told Meusa how Paul had asked her to go down to Paradise with him, telling her he would entertain her well. "And Meusa," she cried, "imagine my horror when he opened the sliding-door of the snake's case. Then, taking my hand, he said, 'I know you are no coward, and I am going to show you something that a coward could not endure.' I thought I should have died of fright when the snake moved toward us slowly, but surely. I would not allow Paul to see how

afraid I was. The result was as Zura told you. I thought we were about to be strangled and crushed together. Paul raised his eyes and the snake fell in a heap, apparently lifeless at our feet. Paul turned to me and, pressing my hand within his own, said 'Brave little girl. I am proud of you. Not because you were not afraid, for you were. I could hear your heart throbbing wildly in the silence. But because you conquered that fear.'"

"And you did not even cry out?" incredulously questioned Meusa.

"No," answered Edna, a little of the old color returning to her cheeks. "But I was horribly afraid. After all," she continued, "I would rather die with Paul than live without him. Send Zura away. I have something to say to you."

After Zura left the room Edna turned to Meusa, led her to a couch and said:

"Now we are comfortable and can talk. Meusa, I think the time has come for us to risk everything and either gain or lose."

Then she told Meusa of her conversation

with Paul. "I am certain Paul saw Ormond kiss you, for he said that you might yet be happy. You know sometimes actions speak louder than words, and I gained my information more from his actions than his words, and somehow I have taken heart and still hope for a happy ending. Meusa," earnestly asked Edna, "are you quite sure you do not care for Paul?"

"Me!" exclaimed Meusa, "of course I don't love him. How silly you are."

"Well, you see," gravely answered Edna, "because I care for him I imagine every other woman does the same."

"Not a bit of it," gayly cried Meusa; "as far as I am concerned you can have him and welcome. I think Paul a man who means well, and if he had the right woman as a solace and comforter he might prove one man amongst many. But I am not the right one, and I cannot even help him. We are like the cat and dog that lay peacefully by the fire, one on either side. But when the little girl tied them together all harmony and peace was gone, and nothing but dis-

cord remained. I am sure I don't blame the cat or the dog, but I do blame the little girl for tying them together."

Edna laughed in spite of herself, as she said:

"Woman is a strange problem; the world lays down certain laws and rules for her, and society flatters itself she is obeying them, while all the time at heart (where the wrong lies) she is setting them at defiance and obeying but the one, self and self pleasure."

"Yes, I know," Meusa answered. "I am doing all that. But the important thing is, now that Paul knows, what am I to do? Shall I fall down on my knees and beg his forgiveness, or—"

"Meusa," gravely cried Edna, "don't jest. It seems to me too serious a matter to admit of jesting. Paul told me he must be convinced with his own eyes. That when he saw you in the arms of the man you love, and was able to judge for himself, then he would take what steps seemed to him necessary for your happiness."

"Oh, Edna! won't you send for Ormond

to come at once, then send for Paul, the wise, to come and behold us? There, never mind, dear," as a cloud flitted over Edna's face, "I won't be foolish again. I suppose I ought to be worried, but the truth is, I can't find even a ghost of a worry to save me. This is one of my happy days. I have no doubt," she more gravely continued, "the worry will come soon enough."

They talked long and earnestly of the future; Meusa persisted in painting glowing pictures for them which had the effect upon Edna of making her shudder rather than smile. It was at last arranged that Edna should tell Paul where he would find Ormond and Meusa, and place him in a position of being convinced for himself. Meusa suggested that Ormond be in ignorance of the plot.

"For," she laughingly cried, "I suppose what Paul wants to see is a desperate despairing love."

"But have you thought of the consequences?" anxiously inquired Edna.

"Oh," Meusa lightly answered, "I can

manage Ormond and you must attend to Paul. There now, don't look like a wise, solemn owl,'' she cheerfully cried. ''It will come all right. It will be a grand climax. Forsaken husband silently watching successful rival make love to his wife. Then comes the discovery, Husband raves and tears his hair, while successful rival smiles and remains silent. Then an old sweetheart of forsaken husband comes upon the scene, and peace is restored through her pouring oil upon the troubled waters. All ends by forsaken husband saying to unfaithful wife and lover, 'Bless you, my children, bless you.'''

DREAM THIRTEENTH.

The Storm Breaks.

"Do yon mean to tell me that my wife," with great emphasis on 'my,' "has proven false to my teachings, has betrayed me behind my back?" and Paul Ravenwood looked at Edna, his pride aroused and his face white with rage and passion.

"Oh, Paul, don't get so excited," Edna entreated; "I did not say any such thing. I simply told you I had proof that she loved Ormond and he more than loved her—he worshiped her. I did not tell it to bring harm upon your wife, my friend; I told it, thinking perhaps for the sake of those bygone days you might listen to me, and allow me to plead for her. Paul! Paul!" she cried, "don't make her suffer as I have done. I knew what it was to live with one I could not love. It is worse than death, the most bitter of all lots. Pardon me," as she saw a stern smile curve his lips, "I know Meusa shows bad taste, but she is not to

blame, and I fear you are. Won't you listen?" as he turned from her. "Don't hate and despise all women because one has fallen short of your ideal. That is unjust, cruel. I, the woman that you wooed, won and betrayed, then forsook, still love you. Oh, God!" she cried, all the pent up misery of years gushing forth, "how I have loved, how I have suffered. I—I cannot even now see one bright spot in the future. All is as black as the streamers of crape that fluttered from our door when my husband lay dead. I live, yet the best part of me is gone, and I dare not put out the emblem of death. The world would only sneer at a broken heart."

Throwing herself upon the floor she abandoned herself to her misery. She was a strong, brave woman, but when she pledged herself to fight Meusa's battles she found out how weak she was, for she was battling with friendship on one side and love and tender pleading on the other. She longed for a strong arm to lean upon, if only for a moment.

Paul had told her he still loved her, and she believed him. Yet she knew he was incapable of a love that could rise above the grosser things of life and live in an atmosphere of purity and self-sacrifice.

If his pride could be kept from being wounded, from taking a hand in the strange complicated affair, all might go well. But if not, all would be lost, and she was yet young and so longed for a little happiness. Her whole heart yearned and cried out for the love that was denied her.

When she first came to Ravenwood Hall she would have accepted Paul's love at any price; now everything was changed. Meusa was her friend, and she felt that she would rather die than betray that friendship.

"Edna," get up," cried Paul, as he gently raised her and held her to him. "Your misery is like a great stab in my heart. My eyes are open at last and I see myself as I am and have been, an egotistical fool. It is only right that I should suffer what I made you endure. Before God, I swear I will sacrifice everything, if needs be,

to atone to you for my cowardly conduct. I left you when you most needed me; I was cruel, inhuman. Henceforth I devote my life to you, and you only. You can make a man of me by helping me when I am weak and encouraging me in my strength."

Edna could not speak. Never before had she known him in such a mood. His words made her very happy, and she believed and trusted him. Yet she could not quiet the fear and dread within her.

"Look up, Edna, he softly pleaded; "let me see your eyes and hear you say that you still trust me?"

She raised her eyes to his face, and the answer he read sufficed.

He laughed a bright, happy laugh, such a one as she had not heard since the day he was her hero, she his love.

"There," he said, "I must go, but I cannot promise anything now. I must think what is for the best. As for Meusa, I will believe you in the matter. You can tell her for me I retract my wish to see her with her lover; I will not trouble them. But I tell

you, Edna, in my heart there has been a deadly hate for Ormond, and I fear I shall have to call upon you to help drive it out. It was not brought there through any feelings of jealousy, but my self-pride was wounded and resented the thrust. Now your devotion and love has cast a softening influence on what little heart I can boast of. I think I can fight and overcome my weaknesses. We will be happy in our own way, you and I, and allow the world the same privilege."

"Paul," she answered, with a determined ring in her voice, "that I do love you is needless to say, but I will accept no happiness from your hand until I know Meusa is safe and happy. Safe from the idle tongues of the world. When such a time comes, then I am yours for all time and eternity."

His face clouded with anger, and he half turned as if to go.

"Don't be angry, Paul. Think a moment, and I know you will see I am right."

"I am not angry," he petulantly cried; "I am bitterly disappointed. Why must

Meusa interfere with you and me? Haven't you suffered enough?"

"Yes," she calmly replied, "too much. I suffered and waited for years, yet you refuse to wait, perhaps, for only a few days or weeks."

"I know you think me foolish; I think myself so. But I can't help it. I don't know that I am Paul Ravenwood, I am so changed. My books are neglected, my hobbies are laid by. I only think of you and how to make you happy. Yet I know that my feelings are not wholly actuated by love. It is, in part, a desire to rid myself of the feelings that of late have rankled in my heart, that I am a miserable coward and traitor. I feel all this, and I imagine the world recognizes it in me also. Only yesterday I went down to Camp Rescue, and I imagined the men looked at me in pity. I, Paul Ravenwood, pitied. But of course it was imagination. I have kept you here too long; have I wearied you?" he gently inquired.

"No," she softly answered, "I am happier than I ever expected to be. But I am

thinking of Meusa, and wondering how I can help her."

"Curse Meusa. I beg your pardon," he quickly cried. "But let her alone. Think of yourself and be happy. Meusa has proven she can be so without our aid. I only ask you to trust me."

"I will, Paul. I will take Meusa your message, and I know she will be very happy to receive it."

"No doubt," he dryly said. "Good-bye little sweetheart," stooping to kiss her, but she turned away. "What," he cried, "not even one kiss?"

"No," she slowly answered, "I fear I must repeat what I before told you. When Meusa is safe and happy, yes. But until that time you must be patient, very patient."

"He looked at her for a moment, then turned on his heel and left her. When he reached the hall he met his wife. She saw something unusual in his face and grew confused, and stammered:

"Why, Paul, I— I— thought—"

"You thought I was poring over my books,

You were mistaken. Go into the drawing-room. Edna is there waiting to see you. When you have finished with her come to my study; I will await you there."

He strode along the hall rapidly, entered his study and threw himself upon a chair by the open window. The air was balmy with soft spring breezes and he was soon lost in thought. He heard a timid knock on the door and, upon opening it, Meusa stood before him. She was not the wilful Meusa of old, but more like a timid frightened child. He apparently did not notice the change, but placed an easy chair for her at the window, and she seated herself without a word. There was a silence, that to her grew very oppressive, and she drew a sigh of relief when she heard Paul say:

"Have you seen Edna?"

"Yes," she replied, while her eyes sought the floor.

Somehow, as she sat there with Paul looking at her, she felt as if she had broken the whole Ten Commandments and perhaps some new ones of Paul's making.

"I suppose she gave you my message?" he inquired, in the same even voice.

"Yes," Meusa answered, wishing the floor would open and swallow her up.

"Then listen to what I have to say," Paul said, still in the same even voice.

Every remnant of courage forsook her and she dropped upon her knees before him, sobbing:

"Don't, Paul; please don't scold me. I know I am a great sinner compared with you, but indeed I can't help it and I am so sorry if I have broken your heart. But I never loved you as a wife; I always thought of you as a wise big brother."

He smiled in spite of himself. "Break my heart? What a tender conceited child you are. No, my dear wayward one, you haven't broken my heart, but you have wounded my pride, trampled under your feet all my teachings, and to me that is far worse than breaking a dozen hearts. Don't cry and spoil your bright eyes and your patrician nose, but look upon me as your brother and tell me the truth. Then I can help you."

"I cannot," she sobbed; "indeed I cannot. I feel so ashamed that I did not trust you in the beginning. If I had I might have been spared many a wretched hour."

"Those that were spent with me?" he interrupted, "but never mind. You needn't say 'Yes.' Tell me everything."

"I have nothing to tell," she cried in desperation. "Only that I love Ormond, and have since the first night I met him, and I know he loves me. Indeed, Paul, I did try to fight against it, and if you had been less engrossed with yourself, and remembered that I was a child no longer, I might have been saved."

"Saved," he reiterated, "from what? Haven't you been happy in your love?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, then remembering herself, she stammered, "if—you—had been different I might have been happy with you."

"I have no doubt," he answered with a smile, "but unfortunately I am Paul Ravenwood not Ormond Radnor, and it is the latter that you can be happy with, not me.

Now don't worry. I am going to make a proposition to you. If you will be candid with me, and conceal nothing from me of the past or in the future, I will believe in you and trust you. I will forget that you are my wife and be a father to you if possible. But Meusa, remember, you must do nothing that would make you blush for shame to tell your father. Will you do as I ask?"

There was silence for a short time, then she answered in a low tone:

"Yes, Paul, I will." She told him all there was to tell, keeping nothing back except the part Edna played in her love dream. She told him of Ormond's will and higher self, that saved them both. Paul listened in silence. He could not understand such a love, but Meusa's tone and manner convinced him, and he believed her.

"My child," he gravely said, "I believe you, but I cannot understand such a love as you tell me of; but after what you have said, I begin to think my teachings have not quite failed after all. I allowed hate to creep

into my heart against Ormond, but your words have shown me he does not deserve it. He has not done right, but he has done better than I should had I been placed as he has been. I will trust you in the future. You may tell Ormond of our interview if you like. Also say, it need make no difference in our friendship. I ask no explanation from him. I desire that you may both be happy. Go now," he said, leading her to the door.

She stopped at the threshold as if wishing to say something. He saw her hesitation and kindly inquired,

"What is it?"

"I hope you won't feel lonely and unhappy, and fancy that no one cares for you," Meusa said, with a shy look on her face. "You have been very kind to me and I want you to be happy also."

"You need not have your future marred by the thought of my being wretched. I am only beginning to know what real happiness is," Paul replied.

Meusa simply answered, "I am very

glad," and was gone before he could say another word.

Half an hour later, she and Ormond went by the window where he sat, talking and laughing as if life for them was nothing but sunshine.

"Ah, me," he cried, "there is nothing like youth and love, after all. Can it be possible that such a love as theirs can exist in this world of sin and sorrow. I believe what she told me, and yet sometimes a doubt will creep into my heart in spite of myself. Ormond should give his life to some great noble cause, rather than devote it to a puny little love; for the man that conquers self is the man to rule his fellow men.

He picked up his hat and started for a walk. He found himself unconsciously going toward the childhood home of Meusa. Something seemed to urge him on. The cabin still remained, and he knew every spot of ground about it. In front of him a man was hurriedly walking, whom he recognized as a man living at Camp Rescue.

Paul quickly hailed him, and at almost the

same moment they entered the cleared space where the cabin stood silent and deserted. Two graves marked by white marble slabs, stood out in bold relief. Both men started. Bill Jones, the miner, looked at Paul, then hurried on.

Paul saw the look and ground his teeth in rage. By the graves stood Ormond and Meusa. She was bitterly weeping, and just as Paul and his companion entered the clearing, Ormond took her in his arms and kissed her tears away.

Had Paul been alone it would not have troubled him. But he did not intend to take the world into his confidence, and Bill Jones looked at him as much as to say, "I pity you."

Paul followed his companion's example and quickly left, unobserved. He sat down on a fallen tree with his heart filled with rage. He started out with nothing but kind feelings and a firm determination to do what he thought right.

Now by one little act, and one pitying look, he was transformed into a being that

wished only for vengeance, simply because his self-pride was wounded and he had been pitied by a man his inferior.

He meant to arrange matters so that no one could either blame or pity him.

He thought a crime no crime until it was discovered. Now he felt sure his name would be upon the tongues of the whole country and that was more than he could bear. Even if he went away thousands of miles, the fact still remained that they were pitying him in his absence.

It half frightened him when he realized that the only thought that was in his heart now was revenge; that meant ruin for the helpless lovers. Had he done as his anger dictated he would have killed them then and there. But he fought off the desire and walked on, determined to go to the camp and face it out.

Upon entering it he met an old man he had known from boyhood, who saluted him with his accustomed:

"How are you, Milord."

But in Paul's present frame of mind he

imagined there was a sympathetic ring in his voice. He ground his strong white teeth and strode on.

As he entered the village store there was a buzz of conversation, but on seeing him silence fell upon the crowd, and again he fancied that all eyes were directed upon him in a sorrowful way. After transacting his business, he left the store, closing the door with a bang. Quickly remembering he had forgotten something, he reëntered just as one of the men was saying:

"Poor devil, I pity him."

He arrived home in time to dress for dinner. Throughout that meal he was very silent. Ormond tried to get him interested in an argument, but was unsuccessful. After finishing dinner they rose to go to the drawing-room, but at the door Paul expressed a desire to be excused, and went alone to the balcony to smoke and think.

All was silent for some time. Then below he heard voices and knew Meusa and Ormond were there. He strained his ears to hear what they were saying. Something seemed

to force him to play the eavesdropper. At first the voices came to him in an indistinct jumble, then he heard Ormond say:

"He has proved himself a true man. I never thought he would act as he has done; I felt rather uncomfortable at dinner, he was so silent; I began to torture myself with the thought he cared for you after all. I sincerely hope he won't prove the dog in the manger now. I really felt like a thief at dinner. I know, to me, you are a priceless jewel, and in loving you I do pity him, and somehow I feel he needs my pity."

"What was that?" Meusa cried, as something like a small ball of fire flashed by them and struck the ground.

Ormond stooped and picked it up, and found it only a half-smoked cigar still lighted. They both laughed, but had they known what the falling of the cigar meant for them, the laugh would have frozen upon their lips.

One hour later they entered the drawing-room and found Edna and Paul there, but what a changed man Paul was.

He was very pale, and appeared like a man but half awake. When he talked with Edna he was very gentle and kind, but away from her he was morose and silent, and his voice was harsh and strained.

Meusa soon saw and felt something out of the ordinary had occurred, and silently bidding Ormond good-night crept out of the room. Ormond following her example, went out into the grounds to smoke another cigar. Edna had also noticed the change in Paul and half suspected the cause.

"I think I am tired also," she said, turning to him; "I believe I shall go to my room."

"Tired of me?" he mournfully inquired.

"No, no," she quickly said; "if I had only myself to think of, I would remain by your side as long as you live. But I won't allow myself to be so selfish. I am determined to finish the rule I began before I allow myself to be happy. Good-night," and she rose to go. But he suddenly caught her hand:

"I think I am learning what love is.

Tell me, is it a thing that makes you feel that without the object of your devotion life would be unbearable? Does it make you both wretched and happy? Tell me, Edna, is that love?"

"I can only answer you in the words of Parthenia:

"What love is, if thou wouldst be taught,
Thy heart must teach alone;
Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."

"That is it," Paul answered; "I feel such love in my heart for you. I fear I have jumped from one extreme to the other. I was cold and selfish in the past; now I feel the love that I once scoffed at burning my very heart out. Oh, Edna, my dear," he cried passionately, "let me love you! Take me back to your loving heart and arms as in the old days. Let me love and caress you as I then did."

She gently disengaged herself from him, but out of the pity of her heart she kissed his bowed head. But when he would have

gathered her to him, she pushed him away, saying:

"Remember what I told you, Paul; wait and try to be patient;" then, with a backward nod of her little head, she left him standing a silent, mournful figure all alone.

Had she known what was then in his mind, she would not have felt so happy as she tripped lightly up the stairs.

Had she allowed him to lavish his new found affections upon her and not, through a sense of duty to her friendship, forbade it, all might have been well. But her actions only brought the fearful doom nearer that she was trying so hard to avert.

DREAM FOURTEENTH.

Peace at Last.

Paul Ravenwood was a man who put great reliance in his own theories. He solved life's perplexing problems in his own way and to his entire satisfaction. Love had made a great change in him—had re-created him—and he knew and recognized the change.

For the time, love ruled him absolutely. This love for Edna spurred him on and he determined to end the matter himself and by his own methods.

Ormond and Meusa appeared to him as a mere unit. Edna filled his heart and life. He went about the house so mute and thoughtful that every member observed his silence and commented upon it. Even the servants spoke of the change to one another.

He said to himself "I will make one more effort to win Edna over to my way of looking at the matter, and if she still insists upon

adhering to her ideas of friendship, then I shall act. Edna must be happy here with me. Ormond and Meusa can be happy anywhere. I don't know how I can adjust matters without some one suffering. Edna must see the bright side of life here before she goes to the great unknown. Poor child," he murmured, "how I have treated, how misjudged her."

That night, after dinner, he asked Edna to stroll with him in the garden. She threw a light shawl about her and soon they were out among the flowers. The stars above them winked and blinked at them, as if knowing of the love that filled their hearts.

The beautiful night had a softening influence upon them. Paul taking her hand retained it in his own; it was hot and feverish, and Edna felt very gentle and kind toward him, as they strolled together. She was troubled about him and, woman like, blamed herself for his appearance. Yet her heart told her it was pride that had wrought the change. She thought she should have stepped in between Paul and pride, and

saved his suffering what she knew was a just punishment.

It don't matter what a man does or how he treats a woman; if she loves him she will find an excuse for him at all times, and often will readily believe a lie from his lips because it eases her heart. Common sense is hushed to sleep upon the bosom of love and gently laid away in the cradle of oblivion.

They were standing by a clump of bushes that were putting forth their sweet white buds. Paul was telling Edna of an idea that he had, and showing her how nature and heaven, to his mind, were twin sisters.

The moon rose in all her pale beauty, looking down upon them as if smiling on their love. All was still as they stood with clasped hands drinking in the beauty and inspiration of the hour.

Paul, under the spell of the moment, was his old natural self. They were abruptly aroused by a scattering of pebbles on the other side of the bushes, and they heard Meusa's voice saying:

"I will be there, but ugh! I don't like the place since that ugly reptile has crept in. I wish Paul had left it where it belonged."

"Don't envy him the little comfort he gets out of his favorite, Meusa," Ormond replied; poor Paul, I do feel sorry for him. I fear he feels this affair more than he will admit. He is so changed of late. I pity him. I have a strange feeling to-night when I look at the stars and the pale moon sailing in the heavens. If I believed in presentiments, I should fear some coming evil. It may mean that death is near to some of us. Never mind, darling," for Meusa had grown ghastly in the moonlight, "I was a brute to talk so foolish. We will never be separated."

"I hope not," Meusa answered, clinging to him; "I want nothing better than to live by you, and with you, and when the call comes die in your dear arms. It would not be death to me if you were near."

Edna saw Paul's face grow hard and stern while his whole manner underwent a complete change. He stood there like an aveng-

ing spirit. Edna drew closer to him, for she was frightened and trembled violently.

He placed his arm about her in a mechanical sort of way and remained silent. She raised her face to his and whispered the one word, "Paul." Gradually the stern features relaxed, and love was once more shining from his eyes upon her.

"Are you cold, my darling," he tenderly said; "you are shaking as if with a chill?"

Edna's answer was a burst of tears. Ormond's words rang with a persistency in her ears that baffled all effort to drive them away. Paul looked at her, then drew her to him, and in loving tones endeavored to plead his cause and force her to see through his eyes.

"Ah, Paul," she answered, smiling through her tears, "you have been accustomed to have everything your own way, and I know it is hard for you to find I must insist upon a little of my way. You thought you would only have to say come and I would be yours. To be frank, it is hard for me to resist you. If only dear Meusa was settled and happy where the world could not

sneer at her, you would not have to plead in vain. I would give myself to you, trusting you until I died.''

''Then I tell you Meusa shall not remain as a barrier betwen us any longer,'' he cried.

''What would you do?'' Edna asked in a startled voice.

''Nothing,'' he abruptly answered, ''but make all happy. Come with me to Paradise ; I want to see King.''

''No,'' Edna cried. ''It makes me shudder to-night to think of that snake. Take me to the house.''

He did as she asked, and they walked on in silence.

''Surely,'' thought Edna, ''he is changed. In the old days I would not have dared thwart him where his hobbies were concerned. Yet to-night he uttered no word of blame, nor even smiled at my weakness.''

The next morning at breakfast Paul announced his intention of going to the city for several days, and by way of explanation said he did not feel quite well, and thought a change would prove beneficial to him.

Truly his haggard looks vouched for his statement. He remained in his study all the morning, and after lunch left for the little station, all unconscious that he was being followed.

Zura had grown to suspect him. Her love for her mistress caused her to watch his every movement. This little child of the forest anticipated some coming evil, and she could not rest.

That morning she had carried a bunch of crushed red roses to her mistress, from her master, and when she handed them to her they left two crimson stains on her little brown hands. She would never forget the cry her mistress gave, or forget how she looked, when she took them. Some of the crushed petals fell down the front of her white morning dress, and they looked like great drops of blood. All day long the faithful Zura was troubled, and resolved to watch her master and shield her mistress from harm, if possible.

She was rewarded by seeing Paul, instead of taking the path to the station, take the

short cut to Camp Rescue. There he remained until night cast her black pall upon the earth, then he stole back like a thief and entered Paradise, followed by faithful Zura, who crept behind a large palm and waited.

She could hear Paul talking, and it seemed to her caressing something that she thought was the snake. Then all grew still, no sound breaking the silence. Zura waited, crouched and trembling, afraid to move lest she be discovered or stumble upon the snake, cold drops of perspiration stood upon her forehead and she was half paralyzed with fear. How long she waited she knew not, then she saw the door open and Meusa enter, followed by Ormond.

Never before had her mistress looked so beautiful. She wore a white robe that showed every outline of her magnificent form, and to Zura she was like nothing so much as an angel. Ormond hurried toward her, and her beauty appealed to him as it never had before, and he grew intoxicated by its spell.

"Why did you bring me here?" she softly

asked. "I don't like this place. I am afraid. I hardly know myself."

"I knew there was danger in my forgetting all but that I love you. Yet I braved everything and came. Oh, my love," he cried, "if there is not soon a way found that I can call you mine, I will defy all, even you, and take you and keep you for myself. I am strong, but I have about reached the limit of my endurance."

"I know," Meusa soothingly answered, "the time will soon come when we shall never be parted again. Paul assured me of that only this morning before he left. Do you know," she added in a whisper, "I suspect and fear him of late, and that bunch of crushed roses was like a warning to me."

"Never mind Paul," Ormond cried; "think of me." Then turning her abruptly about, he said: "Why did you wear that dress? Even you are leagued against me."

"I am sorry if it offends you," she half tearfully said; "the night was warm and I thought it the most becoming and at the

same time comfortable. You never scolded about my dress before."

"No," he cried, flinging himself face down among the moss and violets; "I was never so near losing myself in the desire to make you mine as I am to-night," and he buried his face in the moss and she saw his entire frame quiver. She knelt down by his side and kissed his hair. He turned his flushed face to her and drew her gently to his breast, raining kisses upon her face and neck.

"What a strange sweet odor pervades everything," she said, starting up. "Am I going mad, tell me dear, what is it?"

"Only the crushed violets beneath us, that is all," he answered.

"But I am so drowsy," she murmured. "I think I am going to sleep. Hold me closer dear, closer to your heart," and without another word she fell asleep with her head pillowed on his arm, her fingers lovingly caressing his hair. He too found himself fast succumbing to a sleep that seemed to be caused by that peculiar odor. He

looked at Meusa. There she lay, fast asleep, nestled close to him. His eyes closed in spite of himself, and with his last remaining thought he pressed his lips to hers. Then it grew dark. In her hiding place, Zura also was fast asleep never to wake again. Those faithful eyes could not see that Paul had entered and cautiously approached where Ormond and Meusa lay, apparently asleep. He stooped down and listened, then muttered:

"The old Egyptian was right. It did the work and did it well. Poor child, poor boy, I was compelled to treat you thus. I had to do it. I could not atone to her while you were in the way. You did not suffer. You are now at rest and Edna can be happy."

He looked about him as if expecting some one, then suddenly recollecting himself, he walked away with bowed head, not even giving the poor lovers one backward glance as they lay in their last sleep.

"What's that!" he cried, as his foot struck something. "Ah, I forgot; I left the sliding door open. Come, King," he

cried, in a commanding tone, "back to your house."

The snake was accustomed to obey him, as if it understood his very words. But now, in place of obedience, it uttered a hiss, long and loud, and before Paul had time to act, the snake coiled itself about his body. In vain he struggled; in vain he tried to free himself, but he could not. He, too, had met his doom. He tried to cry aloud, but could not. He was being slowly crushed to death. His brain was last to die; as in a dream he heard the crushing of his bones. There came from his throat a gurgling cry. He fell, the snake about him a writhing mass. An instrument of retribution.

* * * * * * * *

Leona awoke with a start and found she had been dreaming a succession of bad dreams, but horribly real. When again she fell asleep the man returned, and gravely said:

"*You have lived again your past life. Now you know all.*"

Then he told her where to go and how to

find her first home, and in that home still lived Edna, waiting for their return as a knowledge that he, Paul, was working out his redemption.

"Now, good-bye," he said; "I have made you suffer, but according to the laws of my world I am permitted to atone, and now I am only awaiting my love, to be forever happy."

* * * * * * * *

It was a beautiful autumn day. The sun was gradually sinking in the west as a party of three alighted at a little railway station.

"What a wild goose chase we are on," laughed the gentleman of the party. "But," he continued in a laughing way, "woman's curiosity must be gratified."

The speaker was Leon Russel, and his companions were his wife and their summer friend, Miss Dormer. They had come to the west to find out if such a thing did exist as a home of Mrs. Russel's former existence. The ladies were really interested in the search, and Mr. Russel came out of idle curiosity and to oblige his wife, whom

he could not refuse anything. They inquired at the station if there was such a place as Ravenwood Hall, and found after a little search that there was a few miles away an old tumble down mansion that had the reputation of being haunted.

"Does any one live there?" Leona inquired.

"An old lady and one servant, I believe," their informer answered, "but the name of that place is Desolation. I never heard any other name. I say, Bill," to an old man who passed them, "you know more about this country than I. Did that old mansion up there ever have another name besides Desolation?"

The old man stopped, scratched his head, then said:

"Why yes, man, it did. When I was a young man it was called Ravenwood Hall, and was owned by a handsome Englishman, a Milord, and he lived there with his beautiful wife. I knew them both well. But one day they suddenly disappeared, and with them a relation of the man."

Mr. Russel, growing interested, gradually moved toward the speaker, and stood almost in front of him. The old man raised his eyes to him and tottered back, crying:

"Why, bless my heart, man, how you startled me. You are the image of that man. His name, let me see, was—I think Radnor."

Mrs. Russel had joined her husband and stood by his side, pale but intensely interested. The old man's eyes had a frightened look as he saw her, and he brushed his hand over them as if he would see clearer. "Bill Jones," he cried, "you are losing what little sense is left in your old toothless head."

Then addressing Mr. Russel, in a tremulous voice, he said:

"The lady, sir, is the image of Paul Ravenwood's wife. Ah, I see," brightening up, "you are his daughter, Miss. For were your mother living now, she would be old and gray."

"No," quickly replied Mr. Russel, thinking Leona was about to faint, she looked so gastly standing by his side, "we are no

relation whatever. We are travelers, and hearing of this old place thought we would like to see it. Thank you for your information, and here is something for your kindness," and he put a crisp new bill into the old man's hand.

Just then the conveyance was brought up that was to take them to the old hall, and they were off to find out if their journey would prove successful or not. They were all silent for a time, but Mr. Russel, catching Miss Dormer's eyes, laughed outright, for they said as plainly as they could, "I told you so." Then he looked at Leona's pale face and tenderly said:

"If you are going to worry about all this rubbish you will make yourself ill. Then I will blame myself for bringing you to such a beastly place."

The carriage stopped, and the driver put his head in the open window and said:

"You will have to get out here, for I can't get through the brush with the team. Go right up there and follow the path, and it will lead you to the house."

They alighted and walked in silence along the narrow path in the direction it led them. Suddenly an old mansion loomed up before them, looking ghostly in the twilight.

Mr. Russel rang the bell, and the sound echoed dismally through what seemed to them a deserted house. After some time of waiting, the door opened and a half grown girl stood before them in open-mouthed astonishment. Leon turned to the ladies and in a perplexed way asked:

"Who on earth am I to inquire for?"

"Mrs. Archibald, of course," Leona answered.

"Is your mistress in?" he inquired of the girl.

"Yes, sir," she answered. "If you want to see her, just walk in and I will tell her."

Mrs. Russel followed the rest into the old library, that at once she recognized as having seen in her dreams. She stood by the window, her face unnaturally pale. Presently the door opened and she turned as if to greet an old friend. She saw a lady with a wealth

of snow white hair advance straight toward her, who, when she saw Mrs. Russel's face, uttered a cry of joy, and clasped her in her arms, murmuring:

"She has come back; I know that my love is saved and waiting for me."

On looking at Leona she said, "Excuse me, madam, I know my conduct must appear wild and strange to you. You so closely resemble one who was a dear friend of mine, that I thought at first you were she. But she was your age when I first knew her and that was many years ago."

Turning to Mr. Russel she inquired what she could do for them, but she tottered and would have fallen had he not caught her in his strong arms, as she cried:

"Dear God, am I mad? Ormond Radnor come back to life?" and she fell to trembling so violently that all united in soothing and comforting her. When she had grown calmer Mr. Russel explained to her why they had come, and how startled they were to find everything just as Leona had dreamed. He gave the manuscript to Mrs. Archibald and

told her that it would explain more fully than he could.

The travelers were made as comfortable as was possible in the old house. Mrs. Archibald gave up her rooms to Mrs. and Mr. Russel, for she said, with a sweet smile, "they are the only homelike ones in the house and have been mine since I made this my home."

When they were alone, Leona turned to Leon with a smile on her lips:

"Here it was, dear, that in my dreams I passed many happy hours with you."

He kissed her fondly and said:

"I am indeed a lucky fellow to have lived two lives in one century and loved the same sweet woman in both!"

"I thought that was all bosh," she gayly cried; "you know you don't believe one word of it."

"Why, my bright darling, you don't imagine in the face of all the proof we have had, I am going to force myself to believe some other fellow loved you? No, indeed! if I have to stretch my imagination at all,

I shall do so by making myself believe I was that lucky fellow."

In the night when Leona was fast asleep in his arms, he heard her murmur:

"Oh, my love, I am so happy. Kiss me, Ormond."

"Hang it all," he muttered; "I am half jealous of that other fellow even if he was myself. I think I will change my name."

In the morning Mrs. Archibald appeared with a tired look in her eyes and an unusual pallor on her sweet wrinkled face. After breakfast she took Mrs. Russell aside and whispered,

"I have read the manuscript, my dear, and it is the truth; I am satisfied you are the dear friend that lived and loved before, and that I buried with my own hands. Come," she said, "bring your husband and I will show you the graves."

Leona went in search of her husband, and found him with Miss Dormer out in the tangled shrubbery. They followed Mrs. Archibald, as she led them to a small enclosed

plot of ground, a blooming mass of flowers. Leaning upon the railing, she said:

"I dug the graves with my own hands; I worked in the silence of the night. I found you all down in that place of death, and the sight turned my hair snow white. I resolved that the world must never know the truth. I hid you all in Paradise, you and your lover—beg pardon, your husband, underneath the moss and violets, and Paul, I concealed beneath a passion vine. Poor little Zura, faithful child, I buried first.

"That is where Paul lies, in that corner, all alone, where I have left room for myself. You and your love, I buried in one grave," looking at Leona and forgetting the others presence. "When I found you his lips were pressed to yours in his last long kiss. Zura lies at your feet. I have marked the graves with flowers. There, underneath the violets you and your sweetheart sleep, and underneath those pansies my lost love lies alone. But it won't be for long, Paul," she murmured; "it won't be for long."

During the quiet of the night she wan-

dered to the spot where Paul rested, and lying down by his grave fell asleep, never to wake again. They tenderly placed her by his side. After the last sad rites were over, Leona stood with her husband by the new made grave and said:

"Come away, dear, I can't bear it. I don't believe in reincarnation, I never did. But there is something we cannot understand." Then stooping down she picked a bunch of flowers, and with a wan smile said:

"From your grave and mine, and yet we live and love."

THE END.

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